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MUSIC AT COURT

FOUR EIGHTEENTH CENTURY STUDIES

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Charles Eugene of Württemberg

Alan Yorke-Long

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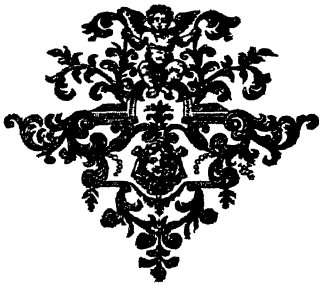
Preface by Patrick Trevor-Roper
Introduction by Professor Edward Dent



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PREFACE

ALAN YORKE-LONG died of cancer in October 1952 at the close of his 28th year, when his initial researches into musical history were nearing completion. From among his scattered writings, the following four essays have been chosen, since they form a reasonably composite group and serve to illuminate the strange and brilliant musical life which flowered under the patronage of many of the eighteenth century despots, and withered so completely with the courts that gave it birth.

Alan Bligh Yorke-Long (the Bligh recalls his forebear of the *Bounty*) was born in 1924 at Hadley in Hertfordshire, the youngest of a large and prosperous family. Both of his parents were Plymouth Brethren, and he himself was brought up during his early years within their close doctrinal confines.

He entered Winchester as a scholar in 1938, and there, under the sympathetic headmastership of Spencer Leeson, he was plunged into an urbane atmosphere of academic enquiry where the fruits of knowledge seemed inexhaustible, if at times indigestible. Against the enchantment of this new world, the walls of dogma made only a token resistance, but these early years had left with him a habit of mental discipline, and an underlying faith which was to return to him during the long weeks when death seemed so near but so elusive.

From Winchester he passed with a scholarship to Balliol, Oxford, where he spent four years studying chemistry, with an enthusiasm which gradually waned as his interest in the music and literature of the eighteenth century became more and more compelling; and his time was happily divided between these and a host of other enthusiasms.

After leaving Oxford, a year was spent teaching chemistry at Aldenham School, where he was also a successful house-tutor, while in his spare time he turned to musical composition. Very few of these

compositions were allowed to survive; they were mostly settings of early sonnets and diversions for chamber orchestra, rich in texture but often taut and astringent, and they were generally rejected by the judgment of his maturer years.

He then moved to London, chemistry and composition were laid aside, and he decided to devote his life to research into the history of music, and in particular to its evolution during the eighteenth century, which had so long possessed for him a very personal appeal. A comprehensive history of eighteenth century court music was planned, a formidable task which was never completed, as it soon became apparent that the chapters he had written were insufficiently documented and detailed for an academic treatise but too heavily burdened for the general reader. So this major work was left in abeyance while research continued, interspersed with occasional fugitive articles and broadcast commentaries. His time was well filled and these were probably the most contented years of his life, writing inexhaustibly throughout the day at the British Museum or in the seclusion of the mews that he had renovated, with concerts most evenings and a rapidly widening circle of friends.

His taste for anecdote and the more picturesque aspects of these European Courts, too spirited for his half-completed history soon found expression in lighter accounts of the musical efflorescence at the four courts of Leopold I of Austria, Charles Eugene of Württemberg, Maria Antonia of Saxony, and Frederick the Great of Prussia. These he started writing in the reverse order, and his strength failed before he could complete the longest chapter (on Leopold), which should have introduced the sequence. He therefore suggested that I might publish, in its place, an account of music at the Court of Parma, which had been designed initially as a chapter of his major and unfinished work, and which was in style and content well in keeping with the other three.

He was an outstanding and unforgettable person—six feet two inches in height, erect and proportionately broad. With an unruly shock of very fair hair, his appearance was striking even without the ebullience which normally transfigured it. He possessed enormous mental and physical energy combined with a deep, almost precocious

sensibility. Since the evangelical background of his early years had precluded many of the more natural outlets, he soon acquired a habit of didactic enquiry which at the first opportunity extended far beyond theology. While at Oxford he read voraciously and widely, driving through the complete works of Richardson in his first year; but conscious of his considerable intellectual equipment he was always saved from arrogance by a leavening of insight and sympathy. He was never bored; even the trivialities of human behaviour provided an inexhaustible source of entertainment, and if one allowed one's own foibles to be laid bare, the reward was not criticism but affection. While beneath this joyous open-handedness lay a capacity for idealism and spirituality to which some of his letters and one unpublished story bear testimony.

During the six months that preceded his last illness, he was well aware that a fatal recurrence was expected, but this knowledge was never permitted to affect his life or bearing; and when the further tumours did appear, he faced the inevitable decline into death with the same unaffected courage and serenity, which the pain, frustration and ever-increasing weakness of the remaining months could not dispel.

My acknowledgements are due to the many friends of Alan Yorke-Long and myself who have assisted me to prepare the text and to assemble the illustrations; especially to the Hon. Edward Sackville-West and Mr. Desmond Shawe-Taylor who helped me to tidy up the various manuscripts, and to Mr. Frank Walker for his patient correction and verification of the proofs.

In my search for appropriate illustrations, I must record my gratitude to Mr. Edward Croft-Murray for the loan of his original Breitkopf edition of Maria Antonia's opera *Telestri*, and of his festa edition on the Teatro Farnese, as well as his help in locating the various portraits that I have borrowed from the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum; to Mr. A. Hyatt Mayor, Curator of Prints at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art; to Mr. Karl Kup, Curator of the Spencer collection at the New York Public Library; to Mr. Nicholas Powell; to Mr. Raymond Russell; and to Mr. Bentley Bridgewater and Mr. Angus Wilson of the staff of the British Museum.

Finally, I am indebted to the Crompton bequest fund from which the Society of Authors has granted a generous contribution towards the publication of this book.

126 Harley St. W.1. PATRICK TREVOR-ROPER

INTRODUCTION

THE HISTORY of European Music has been studied from many different points of view. The general tendency of modern researchers has been to concentrate almost exclusively on the development of its technique, with the result that their writings tend to become less and less intelligible to the general musical reader, however instructive they may be to the trained specialist; it is all too easy to separate music entirely from all the other arts, from poetry, from general social history—in fact from everything but itself. On the other hand those authors who have set out to associate music more closely with the visual arts have always found themselves in difficulties because the history of the visual arts does not run exactly parallel with that of music; the same is true of the history of poetry. Even at times when the poets and the musicians have collaborated most willingly and intimately we are apt to feel that they are not quite on equal terms; one party seems to tyrannize over the other, though we of today may very possibly be led astray in our judgments by our individual response to music and poetry. When we consider music from a social point of view, whether in the theatre or the church or elsewhere, we are at the mercy of our personal prejudices, most especially those of nationality.

We find too that during most of the last two thousand years music, even when apparently most held in honour, has always been in a position of subservience; Beethoven is practically the first composer, certainly the most conspicuous one, who writes for himself and not for an employer. In the Middle Ages and for some time beyond them, the chief employer of music was the Catholic Church. It has often been maintained that the Church "inspired" the art of European music; it would be more true to say that music inspired the Church. The Church was the first great utiliser of music, and it sought to

utilise it, because, as we learn from St. Augustine, it was afraid of music. The history of church music shows us plainly from the earliest days down to the *Motu proprio* of Pope Pius X that the so-called "handmaid of the church" very soon asserted herself, and continued to do so unabashed, as a *serva padrona*. The stimulus of the Renaissance, with its ever-increasing encouragement of purely secular music, soon led to the universal recognition of music as an independent art in its own right; music might still be regarded as an accessory to social life and the musician still be in a position of social inferiority, but the "maid" was frankly accepted as a "mistress" and indeed as a "mistress" in the sense of a lady of pleasure, *una cortigiana onesta*, as she came to be called at the end of the seventeenth century.

Opera, at its first beginning, was an attempt to establish the supremacy of poetry over the tyranny of music, but within a few years poetry was forced to surrender again to the genius of Monteverdi, and by the end of Monteverdi's life the triumph of music was already complete, but it was the triumph not of the composers but of the singers, the *virtuose* who in private life were anything but virtuous, and still more the *castrati*, a new and strange phenomenon which the theatre had taken over from the Church. From this date until after the French Revolution, when the new sense of humanitarianism led Napoleon to abolish them altogether (except in the Church, where he was powerless) the *castrati* dominated the whole of Italian opera, and we may almost say the whole of music. Throughout all Europe Italian opera was the paramount influence on music; France alone resisted it, but eventually succumbed to a greater extent than French historians are sometimes willing to allow. France always refused to tolerate the *castrati;* to the ears of travellers from other countries French opera was not music at all. France had her revenge, as we shall learn in the course of this book; but it was the French dramatists and men of letters, not the French composers, who reasserted the eternal supremacy of the French intellect.

The primary concern of the German princes, whether Catholic or Protestant, was the maintenance of their own dynasties, and to this end the Italians, poets and architects as well as musicians, were only too glad to lend their co-operation as long as they were adequately paid for it. The first German court to utilise opera in the service of

dynastic glorification was naturally Vienna, not merely because the House of Hapsburg was the most important of the dynasties, but also because Austria was Italy's nearest neighbour. We must not forget that the Hapsburg family were during those two centuries exceptionally gifted, as compared with other ruling houses, with genuine musical ability; otherwise it might not have occurred to them that music might be of use to their political ends. In the seventeenth century it was not so much music as scenery and spectacle that dominated their operatic monstrosities; the composer was always a mere accessory, and in the eighteenth century it was the poets Apostolo Zeno—more of a historian than a poet—and Metastasio who reduced these dynastic celebrations to severer proportions and standardised the typical eighteenth century form of *opera seria*, under the literary influence of Corneille and Racine. Their first concern however was always the glorification of absolute monarchy; it was no longer necessary to symbolise the grandeur of the empire itself, but more urgent, in days when dangerous democratic tendencies were beginning to manifest themselves in other countries, to concentrate attention on the nobility and magnanimity of the emperor. The very last of all dynastic operas, Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito*, is a remodelling of a typical libretto of Metastasio, and it is significant that to modern critics the ever-recurring clemency of Titus is merely ridiculous. Metastasio paid homage not only to the emperor but to the singers as well, and no librettist ever offered them (and the composers who served them) such magnificent opportunities for vocal display.

The smaller German courts, Stuttgart, Dresden, Berlin and the rest, soon began to follow the example of Vienna. In some cases there was a genuine musical interest and enthusiasm on the part of the rulers themselves, and one of the most fascinating aspects of this book is the author's sensitive appreciation of the personal musicianship of such characters as Frederick the Great and Maria Walpurga, Princess of Bavaria and Electress of Saxony. In other cases, such as Stuttgart and Hanover (Hanover is not discussed in the present volume, which is only a first instalment of a much more comprehensive work) ostentation and the universal desire to emulate the glories of Versailles are more conspicuous than princely devotion to music. The personality of a composer such as Jommelli or Steffani overshadows his

royal employer. The nearer we move in the direction of France, the more we notice the influence of French opera—not in the music itself, which remains always Italian in character, but in the co-operation of ballet and pageantry.

The first chapter of this book is devoted not to a German court but to that of Parma, a city almost completely ignored by German historians. Parma begins as an Italian court in the great traditions of Mantua and Ferrara with the erection of the enormous Teatro Farnese, inaugurated with a vast spectacle for which the music was composed by Monteverdi; but after the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748 Parma passed to the Infante Philip of Spain under whom the duchy became more French than Italian in its culture and was mainly ruled by Philip's minister the Frenchman Guillaume du Tillot. To the student of operatic history this chapter is most illuminating, for it throws much new light on the work of Tommaso Traetta, a Neapolitan composer whose importance has only recently been to some extent recognized. Du Tillot, among his many other activities, had started to provide Parma with a French theatre; in 1757 he brought a French opera company over to perform a French *opéra-comique* and followed it up in 1758 with Rameau's *Castor et Pollux,* also sung in French. The Italians in Parma appreciated the spectacle, but let it be understood that they would prefer to hear their opera in their own language and with Italian music; so Du Tillot had another libretto of Rameau's, *Hippolyte et Aricie,* translated into Italian and set to music by Traetta, who was already settled in Parma as music-master to the young princesses. It was this opera which paved the way to the reform of opera which is generally credited to Gluck.

At Stuttgart, Dresden and Berlin the interest centres more on the personalities of the rulers. We follow the very gradual development of a passion for music in the case of Charles Eugene of Württemberg, a young man of brilliant abilities, devoted at first mainly to history and antiquities, then carried away by an insatiable appetite for grandeur and pomp which leads him to ruin the finances of his country in opera of the most spectacular type and the gratification of a more purely sensual appetite for the charms of ballet dancers. Yet he eventually had the musical discrimination to discover the greatness of Jommelli and make him his court composer, until as he grows to

old age he seems to lose interest and finds himself forced by the hostility of his subjects to reduce his extravagant expenditure and allow the opera to fall into decadence.

The most remarkable of all these royal patrons of music is Maria Antonia of Bavaria, Electress of Saxony, poet and composer herself, whose artistic career is here described in full detail. Lastly we come to Frederick the Great, for whom music was a lifelong passion. He differs from the other rulers in that he systematically employed German composers and not Italians, although they were obliged to write their operas to Italian words and have them sung mainly by Italian singers. To the English student of history in general and especially to the student of musical history it is almost incredible that in Germany, the country which we are accustomed to think of as the most musical in Europe, as well as the country of poets like Goethe and Schiller, German music was regarded as positively barbarous and utterly despised in the highest ranks of society and the German language too. Under the impact of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars this artificial culture quickly disintegrated; but it was a long time before German poets and German composers were able to create a real school of serious German opera. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the situation for German opera was very similar to that of English opera at the beginning of the twentieth. For two hundred years opera had been an extravagance for the entertainment of princes, and when princely extravagance had to come to an end there was no public ready to appreciate and to support anything but the lightest forms of music and drama. Even if there had been a public for them the four German operas of Mozart and Beethoven were not enough by themselves to make a German repertory; the repertory, such as it was, consisted almost entirely of French and Italian light opera in translation.

The art of music had for too long been subservient to the glorification of monarchy and to the vanity of singers; it could find its salvation only by retiring into itself and developing its own resources. Dynastic opera crumbled with the dynasties, but the memories of it fertilised the new art of the classical symphonists in which the idealistic and philosophic mind of the German people gradually

began to discover a new form of religion, the religion of "absolute music" exemplified by Beethoven which was the real basis of the music-dramas of Wagner.

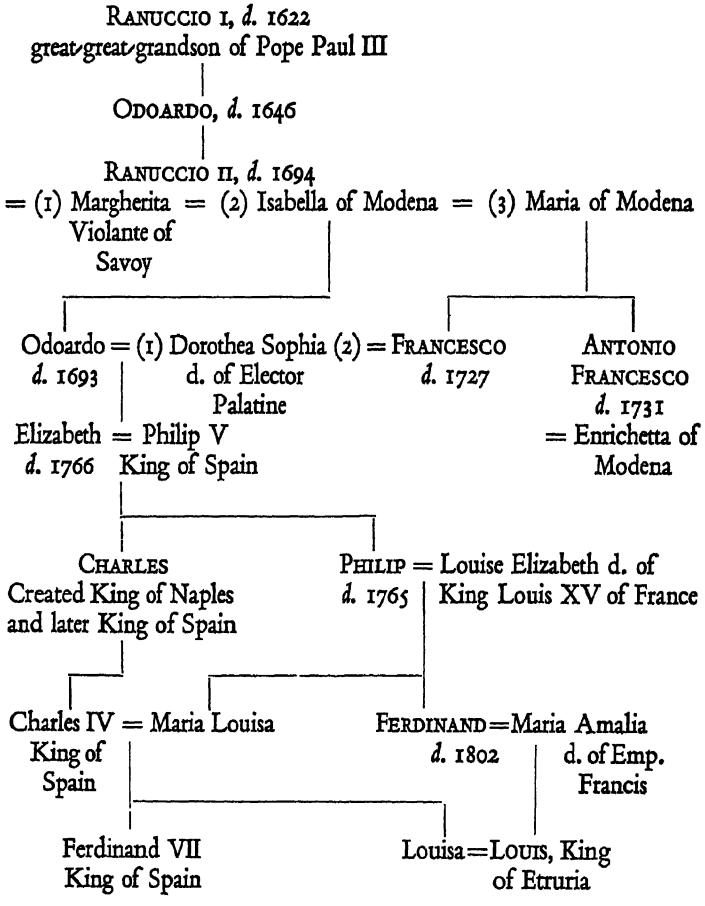
EDWARD J. DENT

PART ONE

*

THE DUCHY OF PARMA

DUKES OF PARMA


RANUCCIO I, d. 1622
great-great-grandson of Pope Paul III
ODOARDO, d. 1646
RANUCCIO II, d. 1694
= (1) Margherita Violante of Savoy
= (2) Isabella of Modena
= (3) Maria of Modena
Odoardo d. 1693
= (1) Dorothea Sophia d. of Elector Palatine
(2) = FRANCESCO d. 1727
ANTONIO FRANCESCO d. 1731
= Enrichetta of Modena
Elizabeth d. 1766
= Philip V King of Spain
CHARLES Created King of Naples and later King of Spain
PHILIP d. 1765
= Louise Elizabeth d. of King Louis XV of France
Charles IV King of Spain
= Maria Louisa
FERDINAND d. 1802
= Maria Amalia d. of Emp. Francis
Ferdinand VII King of Spain
Louisa
= LOUIS, King of Etruria

Dukes of Parma shewn in capitals

I

THE DUCHY OF PARMA

PARMA AUREA, PARMA SUPERBA—the golden age of the proud Farnesi and the disdainful Bourbons is gone, and only by such epithets can we recall the vanished glories of what is now a rather decayed little city. The treasures of the Farnesi have gone to Naples, their summer palace at Colorno has become a lunatic asylum, their great theatre is a wreck, and the frescoes of Correggio on the dome of the Cathedral are blurred and smudged, almost meaningless; yet the vast bulk of the Pilotta and the six golden lilies on a blue ground, picked out in marble and lapis lazuli *intarsiatura* in the church of the Steccata, recall the splendour of the old dynasty, and from the dank and overgrown island of the great fishpond can still, perhaps, of an evening, be heard the last strains of *Le Glorie d'Amore,* the last distich of some Arcadian madrigal.

It was the sinister and energetic Pope Paul III who carved off Parma from the States of the Church and presented it to his son Pier-Luigi Farnese; and by this act of family aggrandisement he saved Parma from the stagnation which overtook the rest of the Patrimony of St. Peter. For the Farnesi proved on the whole to be a beneficent dynasty, and the brilliance of their Court and their enlightened patronage of the arts brought more fame to the city than could ever have been achieved by any Cardinal Legate. No more moral and no less subtle than the neighbouring Estes at Modena or the Medici Grand Dukes over the mountains at Florence, the Farnesi formed not the least part of that curious trio of principalities, which functioned with splendid and ponderous precision in the very home of the Baroque, and which afforded to foreign observers plentiful material for scandal and instruction. The clear if harsh lines of the Early Renaissance rulers and the opulence of the High Renaissance are lost, and these Dukes appear

mysteriously emerging from the *sfumato* of their own painters, their greatness emphasised by the dramatic *chiaroscuro*. The element of personal display is seldom absent, and they never tire of re-affirming their position with ever more elaborate entertainments, performed without the over-bearing and quasi-religious pomp of the Habsburgs, and with a truly Italian fantasy and artistry.

The scene of the great spectacles at Parma was the Teatro Farnese, at the time of its construction considered one of the wonders of the world, admired throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and still, even in its ruined condition, monumentally impressive. In 1604 Ranuccio I of Parma had been entertained with great magnificence at Florence by the Grand Duke Ferdinand I, and had seen, among other spectacles, a performance of Peri's *Dafne*, usually considered to be the earliest opera, since it was first given in 1597.[1] This work did not apparently impress Ranuccio to the extent of any attempt at emulation, though he had great intellectual ability and a fine culture; indeed the simple early operas never found their way to Parma, and the "new music" first appeared as the accompaniment of Court intermezzi and ballets. Late in 1617 it was announced that Ferdinand's son Cosimo II of Tuscany would visit Parma on his return from a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Charles Borromeo at Milan, and Ranuccio resolved to take this opportunity to outdo himself in sumptuous welcome. An opera would be performed, replete with all scenic devices which twenty years had brought into fashion in opera, and on no improvised stage, but in a permanent theatre such as was at that time almost unknown in Italy.

The commission to build this theatre was given to Gian-Battista Aleotti, whose first action was carefully to inspect the only perfect specimen in existence, the famous Teatro Olimpico at Vicenza, which had been completed in 1583 by Scamozzi after Palladio's designs, and which was supposed to be an exact re-creation of a Roman theatre as described by Vitruvius. The *salle d'armes* in the Pilotta, the enormous

[1] The date of *Dafne* is sometimes given as 1594, *vide* Sonneck. However generous his intentions, Ferdinand did not intend to spend money unnecessarily. The libretti for the 1604 performance of *Dafne* were simply the unused copies from the edition of 1600 with a newly printed and dated title page.

palace which Ranuccio had begun in 1608, offered ample scope for Aleotti, and in the winter of 1617–18 he was able to construct a theatre which, if it owed its basic conception and many of its details to Palladio,[1] was able to avoid the slightly cramped effect of a semi-circular auditorium[2] and could outdo the Teatro Olimpico in the extended severity of its vast proportions. A long pit or arena, which was in effect part of the performing space, was surrounded by a balustrade and tiers of stepped seats, rising to a double row of boxes in superimposed Doric and Ionic orders, while the enormous proscenium arch was flanked by two doorways, over which rode equestrian statues of Ranuccio's predecessors, the Dukes Ottavio and Alessandro: the whole formed a composition of harmonious and simple grandeur, free from any excrescences of the already flourishing baroque style. In theatrical history the building has an additional importance, for Aleotti had abandoned the fixed scene-perspective of the Teatro Olimpico, had constructed grooves for sliding wings and had installed machinery for the rapid changing of the scenery.

Such was the Teatro Farnese, and it is ironical that the occasion for its building was abortive, for Cosimo, shattered in health and apparently unrelieved by St. Charles Borromeo, resolved to return to Tuscany direct by sea from Genoa. An elaborate intermezzo *La Difesa della Bellezza* had been prepared for him, but it seems that it was abandoned, and the theatre had to wait ten years for its inauguration. In 1628 the already close relations between the Courts of Florence and Parma were cemented by the marriage of Cosimo's daughter Margherita to Odoardo Farnese, the new Duke. Odoardo resolved as a point of honour to outdo Cosimo in the splendour of the nuptial celebrations, and without doubt he succeeded. Monteverdi himself was called to Parma and wrote the music for five intermezzi

[1] Aleotti copied the proscenium of the Teatro Olimpico for the Teatro Farnese, and the double row of boxes was copied from the exterior of Palladio's Basilica at Vicenza.

(Lombardi, *Il Teatro Farnesiano di Parma*. Arch. stor. prov. Parm. Vol. 9, 1909.)

[2] The decision to set back the steps and the boxes into a horse-shoe form is attributed by a contemporary writer to the Marchese Enzo Bentivoglio, who was the director of the building after Aleotti had departed in March 1618 to see to a law-suit at Ferrara. (Lombardi, *Op. cit.*)

which were performed on December 13th in a wooden theatre erected in the courtyard of the palace. On the 21st the Teatro Farnese was inaugurated with *Mercurio e Marte,* for which Monteverdi had again composed the music, on rather indifferent words by one Achillini. *Mercurio e Marte,* an early example of *seicento* extravagance, is a curious compound of spectacle, ballet and opera,[1] with an equestrian ballet thrown in, which was danced—or should one say ridden?—by members of the College of Nobles led by the young Duke himself. The last scene was particularly surprising. The seven cavaliers, who included the Duke, were liberated from some sea monsters by Mercury and Mars, whereupon the enraged Neptune flooded the arena to the depth of two feet, to the terror of the audience, who feared the theatre would collapse with the weight of the 4,000 spectators,[2] the water and the machines.[3] A pack of monsters appeared, who surrounded Galatea's island, and a grand Naumachia ensued, until suddenly the sky opened and Jove descended in an enormous machine, with a hundred attendants. After bidding the combat cease, he flung down Discord into the sea, proclaiming that nothing should interrupt the felicity of the Ducal pair.

However, Odoardo did not follow up this splendid inauguration, for he fancied himself a general, and was often absent at other men's wars, while in peace time, frightened by a serious outbreak of the plague at Parma in 1630, he preferred to reside at Piacenza. Here he had performed various *tornei,* or equestrian ballets, such as *La Vittoria d'Amore* by Monteverdi in 1641, and also, in 1644, the first true opera at the Farnese Court, Sacrati's *La Finta Pazza.* These close connections with the flourishing Venetian school of opera were continued

[1] None of the music for *Mercurio e Marte* or for the other intermezzi has survived.

[2] The usual contemporary estimate was that the theatre could hold 10,000 spectators, but it is very unlikely that more than 4,000 could have been accommodated.

[3] The flooding of the arena was disbelieved during the nineteenth century, all writers declaring that it could not have been done: but Lombardi, *op. cit.,* quotes a letter from one of the spectators to the secretary of the Grand Duke, in which he mentions his fears for the collapse of the building, "*che . . . il medesimo salone avesse anche a sostenere il peso dell'acqua, la quale si alzò meglio di un mezzo braccio*".

under Odoardo's successor Ranuccio II, who succeeded to the Ducal throne in September 1646. In 1645 Odoardo had installed as his *Maestro di Cappella* Francesco Manelli, who had composed the first public opera performed in Europe, *Andromeda,* given at the Teatro San Cassiano at Venice in February or March 1637.[1] Manelli was a composer of some fame as a result of this, and it is significant that he should be content to leave Venice, the scene of his early triumphs, and spend the last twenty-two years of his life in Parma. It is evident that the Farnesi were acquiring some reputation as patrons of music.

Ranuccio II was certainly the most magnificent of his dynasty, but his passion for the theatre outran his financial discretion, and the huge sums he spent to attract to Parma some particular virtuoso or to call into being some new fantasy threw the economy of his state into disorder and initiated a decline which was to be accelerated by war and political misfortunes, and which the Bourbon prudence could not reverse. Probably Ranuccio looked no further than the immediate future, and that, certainly, was splendid enough: when he and his brothers danced as Sunbeams in Manelli's Court ballet *Le vicende del tempo,* produced in March or April 1652, while his sisters circled round as Stars, it seemed as if such a potent enchantment could not be broken.

Ranuccio seized eagerly at any opportunity for display, and his sorrow at the early deaths of his first two wives must have been consoled somewhat by the prospect of the celebrations at his next marriage. His *premières noces,* to Margherita Violante of Savoy, which took place in the winter of 1660, was naturally the grandest, and the festivals at Parma in the Carnival of 1661 are said to have cost 80,000 scudi. The chief item[2] was Manelli's opera *La Filo, ossia Giunone repacificata con Ercole,* performed in the Teatro Farnese, the plot of which led on to *I sei Gigli,* a *torneo* performed on the next evening. This *torneo* was a

[1] The libretto of *Andromeda* was written by the lutenist Benedetto Ferrari, who probably also had a hand in some of the music. Ferrari's *Il Pastor Regio* had been given before Odoardo at Piacenza in April 1646, so it is likely that this was at Manelli's recommendation.

[2] There was also an equestrian ballet in the palace gardens, *La Gara degli Elementi,* and a *scherzo drammatico, Le Ali d'Amore,* prefixed to another ballet. The music to these was by Benedetto Ferrari. (Schmidl)

typical *seicento* extravaganza, with every possible ingredient in the plot—historical characters jumbled up with the gods of mythology, amorous intrigues, incantations, animated statues, corpses appearing in their shrouds and what-not. Perhaps the most remarkable solecism was the scene in which the Virgin Mary appeared with a chorus of angels singing the praises of Hercules: but the rationale of this (if such a word can be used) was that Hercules was bearing on his shoulders the falling world, and thus could be taken as symbolic of Our Lord.

Ranuccio's succeeding wives, both Princesses of Modena, were not honoured by such extravagance, but the surviving Duchess, Maria d'Este, seems to have had some initiative in the patronage of music, for in 1673 we find her giving a ballet in her private theatre in the palace, *Le Navi d'Enea,* with music by her *Maestro di Cappella* Marco Uccellini.[1] In the next year 1674, Ranuccio built in the tennis-court of the palace a wooden theatre which came to be known as the Teatro della Racchetta, and in the next few years various operas and ballets were given there, usually at the expense of the Court, but addressed as much to the nobility and the *dilettanti* as to the Court circle. The true opera, as opposed to the Court charivari, had already taken root in Parma, largely owing to the College of Nobles, which performed Manelli's *La Licasta* in 1664 before Cosimo Prince of Tuscany, and from about this time two distinct streams are discernible in the music at Parma, the elaborate Court opera-ballets and *tornei,* staged at colossal expense and intended to serve for only one special occasion, and what might be termed the "repertoire" opera, run, partly at any rate, as a commercial venture, and similar in many respects to (if less tumultuously popular, than) the various theatres at Venice.

The initial ventures at the Teatro della Racchetta seem to have been so successful that in 1688 Ranuccio built a much larger theatre not far from the palace, the Teatro Ducale, which was inaugurated with a performance of Gianettini's *Medea in Atene.*[2] It was then turned over

[1] Manelli had died in September 1667. Eitner declares that there is no evidence for Fétis' statement that Uccellini became *Maestro di Cappella* at Parma, but in the libretto of *Le Navi d'Enea,* quoted by Balestrieri (*Feste e spettacoli alla corte dei Farnesi*), Uccellini is described as *Maestro di Cappella della medesima Altezza* (i.e., the Duchess of Parma).

[2] Extra music for this opera was provided by Sabadini.

to an impresario, usually one of the nobles of the Court, and it became the ordinary public opera, gradually overshadowing in importance the productions at the little Court theatre in the palace, while the great Teatro Farnese remained empty and unused. The Teatro Ducale was dominated during the first twelve years of its existence by an important composer, Berardo Sabadini, the *Maestro di Cappella* of the Duke[1] and also *Maestro* at the Cathedral, whose *Furio Camillo* had been performed in 1686. Along with the favourite dramatic poet Aurelio Aureli, who was in the Farnese service at the time, he produced five operas at the Teatro Ducale, two of them original,[2] and the other three adaptations of works by other well-known composers;[3] it is probable that other works by him were also performed, which have since vanished. Thus by the end of the century the Teatro Ducale had clearly established itself, with operas every Carnival, though the libretti of most of these pieces are scattered or lost and their chronology is uncertain.

But the Court music did not give way before the public opera without one last display. Some fifty years later Muratori could write in his *Annali d'Italia:* "The magnificence with which Duke Ranuccio II Farnese celebrated these nuptials (of his son Odoardo) filled every spectator with wonder and surpassed all expectations, so splendid were the operas performed in the great theatre and in the palace gardens, so rich were the liveries, so extraordinary the machines, the banquets, the balls, the illuminations, the receptions and the concourse of foreign Princes and Nobles. For such festivities that Prince embarrassed himself not a little, but he certainly made his liberality to be much talked of, even though some found it excessive."[4]

[1] It is not known when he became *Maestro di Cappella.* He appears to have succeeded a rather indistinct figure, G-B Policci, whose ballet *Amore riconciliato con Venere* was performed in the Court theatre in 1681 (Balestrieri, *op. cit.*). No details on Policci are given by Eitner or Schmidl.

[2] *Talestri innamorata di Alessandro Magno* (1693) and *Ruggero* (1699). A *Massimino* (1692) mentioned by Balestrieri does not appear in Schmidl.

[3] *Amor spesso inganna* (1689) is a version of Sartorio's *Orfeo. Il Vespasiano* (1689) was written with Carlo Pallavicini. *Eraclea* (Venice 1696, Parma 1700), contains music by Alessandro Scarlatti. *Furio Camillo* was revived in 1697 with additions by G. A. Perti.

[4] Muratori, *Annali d'Italia,* Vol. XI, quoted in Balestrieri, *op. cit.*

Since the days of his own weddings were past, Ranuccio, old and vastly corpulent, resolved to display once more his greatness at the marriage of his heir Odoardo to the Princess Dorothea Sophia of Neuburg in 1690. His three lusty sons were an earnest of the continuation of the Farnese line, though a narrower observer might have been alarmed at the blight of uncontrollable fatness which had suddenly descended on the family, and it seemed fitting that as the dynasty sailed proudly through its second century Ranuccio should celebrate it with a festival even more elaborate than those devised by his no less fertile predecessors. The forces were gathered: the poet Aurelio Aureli was summoned; Sabadini was set to work; the three Mauro brothers, the foremost theatrical engineers in Italy, were brought from Venice and were given as an assistant Ferdinando Bibiena, a young architect from Bologna, whose buildings and stage sets had won such popularity in Parma that he had settled there, and was contentedly raising a brood of young successors in his art.[1] Meanwhile the chronicler of these festivities[2] retails with breathless excitement the notabilities who were arriving to see the show—the Dukes of Modena and Mantua and the Cardinal Rinaldo d'Este, in discreetly publicised incognito, the two sons of the Duke of Mirandola, a natural son of the King of Denmark, the eldest son of the Duke of Holstein, Prince Livio Odescalchi, a nephew of the previous Pope, and so on: "Bologna, Milan, Florence, Mantua, Modena, Lucca, Siena, Verona and all the other great cities of Italy were quite emptied of their foremost citizens, who flocked to the lovely city of Parma".

On May 17th Dorothea Sophia, whose three sisters had married the Kings of Spain and Portugal and the Emperor himself, made her state entry into Parma and was married to Prince Odoardo, while horse races in the piazza and acrobatic shows amused her future subjects. On the 19th there was a reception and an *Accademia* at the College of Nobles, where she was entertained by recitations in all the major European languages and a display of national dances,

[1] Ferdinando Bibiena was assisted at these wedding festivities by his brother Francesco. Ferdinando's children Alessandro, Giuseppe and Antonio were all born at Parma, in 1687, 1696 and 1700 respectively.

[2] Notari—*Descrizione delle Feste . . . nella Città di Parma . . . per le Nozze del . . . Odoardo Farnese. . . .* Parma 1690.

accompanied by symphonies of trumpets, lutes, mandolines, guitars, spinets and viols. Two evenings later the 270 young noblemen united to produce an opera *Teodelinda,* in which sprigs of families such as Mocenigo, Manin, Spinola and Grimaldi were content to appear in female roles or in a ballet of twelve *giovanetti Africani.* Meanwhile, the grace of the male and female Farnesi was displayed in two opera-ballets in the little Court theatre, *L'Idea di tutte le Perfezioni,*[1] in which danced the two young princes Francesco and Antonio, still of manageable proportions, and *L'Età dell'Oro,* graced by the Princess Margherita and her ladies.

On the evening of the 24th there was a great aquatic spectacle, *Le Glorie d'Amore,* which was performed on a great fish-pond dug for the occasion at one end of the palace gardens. The spectators sat in an enormous amphitheatre erected round the lake by the indefatigable Mauri, while on the island palaces appeared and vanished, and Hercules raged and languished with baroque exuberance. The piece ended with the inevitable Naumachia, with six boats in the form of huge fishes filled with Neptune's warriors, and six more representing the labours of Hercules filled with warriors of all nations in fantastic costumes.

The climax of the wedding festivities was *Il Favore degli Dei,* performed on the 25th in the Teatro Farnese, renovated for the occasion—rendered even more auspicious by the public reconciliation of the Dukes of Modena and Mantua before the performance. Aureli's poem was generally bewailed for its excessive *barrocchismo,* but it seems to have succeeded in its main object—to afford every opportunity for scenic and musical display. And with the exceptional body of singers which had been gathered for the festivities (for there were twenty-five principal roles in the opera), Sabadini could hardly have failed to please: among the *virtuose* were Clarice Gigli, Anna-Maria Torri and Clarice Venturini, while the *castrati,* several of whom took female parts, included the great Siface, the singing teacher and composer Pistocchi, Francesco Balarini, Valentino Urbani and Domenico Cecchi, the *mignon* of the Prince of Tuscany. The completely heterogeneous nature of the plot, with scenes in heaven, on

[1] This was composed by Giuseppe Tosi of Bologna, with machines by Stefano Lolli and scenery by Ferdinando Bibiena.

earth, in the sea and in hell, and with fights of all description, gave ample opportunity for the fantasy and ingenuity of the Mauro brothers,[1] and for eight hours on end the machines creaked and groaned in apotheoses and transformations, and the singers warbled away as gods and heroes, and choruses and ballets followed one another in inexhaustible succession. The magnificence of *Il Favore degli Dei* was such that some German nobles in the suite of the Princess were heard to say that it rivalled even the famous *Pomo d'Oro,* Cesti's great festival opera performed at the marriage of the Emperor Leopold in 1666. But few of the spectators could have suspected that it was to herald the extinction of the Farnese dynasty and the disuse and ruin of their great theatre.

For it seemed that the more elaborate the Farnese celebration, the more complete the débâcle that ensued. In 1693 Prince Odoardo, the centre of all these festivities, died, leaving only a daughter Elisabeth, later to be the Termagant Queen of Spain, and in the next year Odoardo was followed by his father, the old Duke Ranuccio. The Farnese line was reduced to the two brothers Francesco and Antonio, whose immense girth and torpid habits gave little promise of procreative ability; and though Francesco, the new Duke, made haste to marry his brother's widow Dorothea Sophia (who had repaid her sumptuous welcome to Parma by developing unpleasantly nagging habits), no offspring arrived to continue the family.

At the same time a series of political disasters broke over the State. Ranuccio's extravagance had drained the Treasury and when war broke out between France and Austria, Parma, as a fief of the Empire, had to submit for four years, 1691-5, to the quarterings of the Imperial troops, whose merciless rapacity brought the little duchy to the verge of ruin. When Francesco came to the throne in December 1694 even the family jewels had been pawned in Bologna, and he wisely celebrated his marriage without any pomp. Francesco was a prudent ruler, and during his reign of thirty-two years he made every effort to reduce the taxes which burdened the country, and to retrench on the Court expenses; he forbade masquerades in Parma (pleasure-

[1] The machines were devised by Gasparo and Pietro Mauro, while Domenico Mauro constructed the scenery, except for the scene of the Roman Thermae, which was by Ferdinando Bibiena.

seekers were obliged to go to Reggio for these delights), and he even imposed a new and heavy tax on the full-bottomed wigs, the very emblem and mainstay of baroque government. But his good intentions were largely frustrated, for during the War of the Spanish Succession, Imperial armies were again quartered in the duchy, though Francesco avoided an actual occupation of Parma and Piacenza by hastily calling in some Papal troops. At the end of the war Parma was ineluctably relegated to insignificance, and had only an artificial political importance in connection with the imminent extinction of the dynasty.

Under these circumstances the Court music withered away almost without trace. Not until 1713 was there any noteworthy festivity, and in October of that year, in honour of the visit of the Electoral Prince of Saxony there was performed in the Court theatre a serenata *La Pace trionfante;* at the end of the work Elisabeth and six of her ladies were discovered in a great machine, from which they descended to perform a ballet. In September 1714 Elisabeth was married to Philip V of Spain, but even on so great an occasion the ceremonies were principally religious: however, the Teatro Farnese was re-opened for a concert *a scelti voci . . . intermezzate di Balli,* and for an opera *La Virtù coronata ossia Il Fernando* by Sabadini,[1] with the two *virtuose* Santa Stella and Durastanti. The records of the public opera at the Teatro Ducale are as scanty and there is a complete gap between 1700 and 1714, though it is most likely that performances continued in the Carnival of each year. We resume the thread in 1714 with Orlandini's *Carlo Rè d'Allemagna,* in which the *castrato* and famous singing teacher Bernacchi appeared. Two years later came the pastoral *Dafni,* by the nobleman-composer d'Astorga, who shares with Stradella and Mozart the fate of a romanticised biography, and there seems to be no basis for the story of an amorous entanglement with the shrewish Dorothea Sophia.

So in pinguid ease the Farnese brothers entered the 1720's, Francesco busily fussing over the affairs of State and his favourite

[1] This attribution to Sabadini is given by Balestrieri, *op. cit.,* who gives details of the wedding celebrations from a MS. in the Palatine Library at Parma. This is the only indication that Sabadini was alive at this date. Schmidl and Eitner mention no composition of his later than 1699.

Order of Constantine, an entirely fictitious order of knighthood which had been sold to him by a Greek named Cornaro, self-styled Duke of Thessaly, and Antonio in perpetual *villeggiatura* at Sala and Colorno, where Ferdinando Bibiena's garden led the eye away to the boundless Lombard horizon. In 1724 there arrived at Parma a figure who was destined to play a considerable part in the musical life of the next fifty years, the poet Carlo Innocenzo Frugoni, who preferred to be known by his Arcadian surname of Comante Eginetico. Frugoni, born at Genoa in 1692, had taken minor orders in 1708 and in 1716 had been sent to Brescia as teacher of rhetoric. Here he joined the local colony of the Arcadian Academy, the elegant and quasi-pastoral literary brotherhood which had its centre in Rome, and thither he went in 1717, ostensibly to study at the Collegio Clementino, more probably to perfect himself in the latest poetical styles of the fashionable salons. He quickly set himself up as a typical Arcadian, an elegant, sciolistic Abbé, discreetly amorous, though always non-committal, and tirelessly producing a spate of verse, correct, well-turned and so subtly flattering that it could not fail to please. We find him in Bologna in 1724, rather surprisingly hailed as a new Pindar as a result of his translation of Crébillon's *Rhadamiste,* for literary Italy was in a ferment since the performance of Maffei's *Merope*, and was prone to recognise a masterpiece in any ingenious tragedy. But Frugoni overreached himself in some satires on various society women and on the Archbishop of Ravenna himself, and he found it advisable to withdraw to the protection of Cardinal Bentivoglio. This amiable prelate, who was already interesting himself with the Holy See to procure for Frugoni a dispensation from his vows, recommended him to the protection of Prince Antonio Farnese at Colorno; so thither Comante Eginetico repaired in the autumn of 1724.

But to his distress Frugoni discovered that more was required of him than a stream of obsequious sonnets. Perhaps the fame of the young Metastasio had percolated from Naples, for the Farnesi made Frugoni turn his hand to operatic dramaturgy. In the spring of 1725 his revision of an old Stampiglia libretto, *Il Trionfo di Camilla,* was performed with music by the great Neapolitan Leonardo Vinci, and with the famous soprano Faustina. The success of the opera was such that Frugoni was obliged to repeat the feat in the next year, and *I*

Fratelli riconosciuti, founded on an old libretto by Silvani, with music by Giovanni-Maria Capello,[1] was performed with an even more brilliant cast, the soprano Diana Vico, the tenor Paita, and the *castrati* Carestini and Farinelli. It is evident that the Farnesi thought highly enough of their new poet to provide the best possible performers.

But now political events supervened, for Francesco Farnese, whose heart was worn out in the support of his huge frame, died of apoplexy at Piacenza in February 1727. The new Duke Antonio, who had escaped a like fate only by his colossal indolence, assumed the government with reluctance, for he had hitherto divided his days pleasantly enough between eating, playing cards, shooting (from a litter), and resting after these exertions. In addition, the State needed an heir, for the Great Powers had already drawn up one treaty parcelling out the Farnese dominions in the event of the demise of the dynasty: so abandoning with a sigh his time-honoured mistress Countess Borri, Antonio trundled regretfully towards the marriage-bed. In July he was betrothed to the blooming, twenty-six-year-old Princess Enrichetta d'Este, and in February 1728 the marriage was celebrated at Modena.

A few days later the Ducal pair made an informal entry into Parma, and later in the spring there was performed Frugoni's first opera of his own composition, *Medo,* set to music by Leonardo Vinci. Frugoni knew that his poetic talent was for nothing more extended than a sonnet, and in letters to his friends he loudly bewailed the difficulties in the writing of this drama: and indeed it is a very poor piece of work, ending with the solecism of a love-duet between Jason and Medea after the murder of their children. But its defects were probably compensated in the ears of the audience by the more than usually brilliant cast, which included Paita, Bernacchi, Farinelli and the contralto Vittoria Tesi. In July Antonia Antonio and his bride made their State entry into Parma, and on the 22nd the Teatro Farnese was opened for one of the last old-style Court operas, a work with the

[1] G-M. Capello was born at Parma in 1648 and died there in 1728. He was a canon of the cathedral and Court Composer to the Farnesi: but his only opera at Parma besides *I Fratelli riconosciuti* was *Venceslao* in 1724. He wrote other operas for Modena and Venice. He was the teacher of Giacomelli. (Schmidl.)

curious title *Le Nozze di Nettuno l'equestre con Anfitrite.* This was written by Frugoni and composed by Vinci, and began with an idyll between Neptune and Amphitrite, in which the two deities expressed boundless confidence in the imminent continuation of the Farnese line; this led on to an equestrian ballet executed by sixteen young pupils from the College of Nobles. It is recorded that the Teatro Farnese was so crowded on this occasion that no room could be found for the Bishops of Parma, Piacenza and Borgo San Donnino, who had all presumably travelled specially from their dioceses to see the show.

There was no opera during the next Carnival, for Antonio intended to follow his brother's example of economy, but in June 1729 Rinaldo of Modena and his daughters came to visit the Duchess Enrichetta, presumably to inspect progress. Frugoni was obviously discouraged from another attempt at drama[1] by the failure of *Medo*, and contented himself with a revision (for the worse) of Zeno's admirable libretto *Lucio Papirio Dittatore.* The music for this opera was by Geminiano Giacomelli, an excellent composer, who had a special relationship with Parma since he had studied with Scarlatti at Naples at the expense of the Duke; though he was at this time officially only *Maestro* at San Giovanni at Piacenza, he is described in the libretto of *Lucio Papirio* as *Maestro di Cappella d'Onore di S.A.S. di Parma.*[2] The opera was sung by a brilliant cast, which included the sopranos Faustina and Antonia Negri and the *castrati* Borosini, Pacini, Bernacchi and

[1] However, he wrote the poor *Scipione in Cartagine nuova,* music by Giacomelli, for the State entry of the Duchess into Piacenza in the spring of 1730.

[2] Giacomelli, born at Piacenza in 1692, studied with G.M. Capello at Parma and with Scarlatti at Naples. About 1723 he was *Maestro di Cappella* to the Duchess Dorothea Sophia. From 1727 until 1732 he was *Maestro* at San Giovanni at Piacenza. In August 1738 he was made *Maestro di Cappella* to the Santa Casa at Loreto, where he died in January 1740. It is not true that he was in the service of Charles VI, but he was director of music at Graz for some time, where his *Cesare in Egitto* was given in 1737. He was a prolific composer of operas, principally for Venice and North Italy. His operas at Parma were *Ipermestra* (1724), *Lucio Papirio* (1729) and *La Costanza vincitrice in Amore* (1738, with Giuseppe Genocchi). He also wrote two operas for Vienna, *La caccia in Etolia* (1733) and *Arsace* (1739 and 1742).

Farinelli, and it was very successful; however, it was to be the last noteworthy performance under the Farnese dynasty.[1]

On January 20th 1731 Duke Antonio died, suffocated by his enormous fatness, and worn out by continual indigestion. But the great Farnese family was not to disappear with the baroque pomp it had always maintained, but with an episode from *opera buffa*. A few weeks before Antonio's death the Duchess had suddenly called for a cup of iced chocolate while heated from dancing, and this simple request had rather curiously led the Duke to believe that she was three months gone with child. Accordingly, when his will was opened, it was found that he had bequeathed all his possessions, including the Duchy, "*al ventre pregnante della Serenissima Signora Duchessa Enrichetta d'Este*", who was nominated Regent. By the Treaty of Seville of 1729 in default of heirs the Duchy had been assigned to the able and ruthless Don Carlos, the eldest son of Elisabeth Farnese, now Queen of Spain. But Enrichetta's belly upset the plans of the Spanish party, and they expressed polite disbelief at the phenomenon, pointing out the size of the late Duke, and also hinting more obscurely that the wife of a palace gardener was in a condition to provide a supposititious child at the correct moment. A touch of personal rivalry and more explicit comedy was added by the return of the Dowager Duchess Dorothea Sophia, the grandmother of Don Carlos, who had bitterly resented her supersession by the young Este Princess. But Enrichetta held her own, and in May she succeeded in convincing a jury of five midwives of the reality of her condition. The head of St. Bernard was exposed in the cathedral, with a benediction *del Venerabile* for the hoped-for male child of the Duchess, but even this powerful aid was ineffective, for on September 13th the pregnancy declared itself as false. Don Carlos, a Bourbon, was proclaimed Duke of Parma and Piacenza.

Three months later Don Carlos landed at Leghorn; but he dallied for a long time in Tuscany, to which he was at that time also the heir, and it was not until October 9th 1732 that he made his entry into Parma. Two days later there was a *carrousel* for sixteen horsemen, called

[1] As well as *Lucio Papirio, Bradamante nell' Isola d'Alcina* had also been performed; the music for this was by Riccardo Broschi, the brother of Farinelli. Between 1729 and 1734 there is a gap in the list of operas at Parma given by Ferrari (*Spettacoli Drammatico-Musicali . . . in Parma*).

with obvious appropriateness *Ascanio venuto in Italia,* and written by Frugoni, who felt that after his repeated paeans of ecstasy at the forthcoming Farnese heir, he ought to put himself right with the new dynasty. But *Ascanio venuto in Italia* is interesting, not for the rehabilitation of a minor poet but as the last Court entertainment given in the Teatro Farnese. Henceforth it was to be merely a vast and dusty curiosity in the palace: the stucco mouldings crumbled, the carved wood rotted, and finally Lionello Spada's painted ceiling collapsed, revealing the joists and beams of the roof: after restoration at the beginning of this century the war gutted the interior once again. The baroque age was past, and the theatre had outlived its function. With the Farnesi, its creators, it died, and the polished Bourbons, sophisticated and pretentious, could have no use for the great structure, whose monumental lines were in implicit condemnation of their rococo arabesques.

The Parmesans soon had cause to regret the advent of Don Carlos and his Spaniards, whose martinet rule contrasted with the easy-going paternalism of the Farnese Dukes. Early in 1734 the War of the Polish Succession broke out between Spain and Austria, and Don Carlos departed south to conquer for himself the kingdom of Naples, whither he removed from Parma all the Farnese art treasures. In June the Austrians invaded the Duchy, sacked Colorno, and were only driven off after a stiff battle outside the city (which Goldoni watched excitedly from the walls). But by the Peace of Vienna in 1736 Parma was awarded to the Austrians, who installed a governor and proceeded to bleed the country for as much money as possible. At the outbreak of the War of the Austrian Succession in 1741, Parma was first captured by the Spaniards and then recaptured, and when the duchy was finally given to the Infante Philip of Spain by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, it had been reduced to a state of squalid misery and destitution. The ducal palaces were deserted, stripped of their furnishings and decaying, the nobles had withdrawn to their country villas, and trade had been almost extinguished by the exactions of the war.

Within ten years the situation changed yet again: commerce and manufactures improved beyond all expectation, agriculture flourished, while Parma itself, which hitherto had enjoyed no particular distinc-

tion among the lesser capitals of Italy, became an intellectual and artistic centre hailed as the "Athens of Italy". All this was the work of two men, the Duke himself, Philip, who was the passively acquiescent agent, and his Minister, the active and energetic Guillaume du Tillot.

The Infante Philip, the second son of Elisabeth Farnese and the younger brother of Don Carlos, is a figure of somewhat equivocal charm. Spanish by birth and upbringing and naturally endowed with a large share of the Bourbon pride, he had become fussily Frenchified, vain to puerility about his appearance (one shoulder was a little higher than the other), his education (which was deficient), and his clothes (he has been called "a creature of French valets"). However, within these limits he seems to have been an agreeable young man, free from the neurotic gloom of his father Philip V, and even if he had none of the canny ability of his brother Don Carlos, yet he also escaped the fatuous imbecility of the later Bourbon generations. On the whole Parma could be proud of a ruler so personable and so lacking in vices (if also in positive virtues), who lived with such magnificence, and who took such pains to improve his capital city.

There were other and more cogent reasons for congratulation. In 1739, when he was only eighteen, Philip had married Louise Elisabeth, the eldest daughter of Louis XV, one of those plump rosy girls whom Nattier loved to portray, and his close connection with the Bourbon Kings of France, Spain and Naples, along with his natural love of luxury, made him determined to emulate them in his own little duchy. He was in a better position than the Farnesi had been to attempt this, for Louise Elisabeth brought with her an enormous dowry and the tender solicitude of her father, who was always ready to pay her debts. At the Treaty of Aix, France and Spain agreed to provide an extremely liberal subsidy for Parma, principally in order to form a bulwark of Bourbon influence between the Habsburg power in Tuscany and Lombardy, and Philip found himself in receipt of a large income wherewith to hold his Court and to improve his State. Fortunately he had the good sense to leave the administration of this subsidy, supplemented by the taxation money from his duchy, in the hands of Du Tillot. He himself was quite content to indulge in colossal Bourbon hunting parties at Colorno, to attend his French

plays and Italian opera, and to strut about in his latest Paris costume.

To Du Tillot we must ascribe the greater share in the artistic efflorescence at Parma. He is indeed a remarkable figure and too little known, though he has a worthy place among the great Ministers of the century beside Choiseul, Kaunitz, Tanucci and Pombal, all-powerful servants of some lazy autocrat, each in their turn displaced by some Court camarilla. Born at Bayonne in 1711, Du Tillot came of a family that had long had some connection with the Spanish Civil Service, and in 1730, when he was only nineteen, he entered the service of Don Philip at Paris. On Philip's marriage in 1739 Du Tillot became private secretary to the Duchess, and he had an opportunity to show his skill at the organisation of Court life during the Austrian Succession War, when Philip was keeping a rather uncertain State at Chambéry, captured from the King of Sardinia. When Philip became Duke of Parma Du Tillot was immediately appointed Intendant of the Court, and in fact wielded an influence much greater than that indicated by this decorative title: but Philip was the protégé of two foreign Courts, and since it was known that Du Tillot, as a Frenchman, was inimical to the Spanish influence, it was necessary to keep him nominally in the background. However, by 1756 the Spanish influence had been so much weakened that Du Tillot could be made Minister of Finance, and three years later he became the Minister of State in actual control of all the departments of government.

This is not the place to discuss Du Tillot's political achievement. In so unimportant a State the most brilliant performance can hardly seem impressive after two centuries, and Du Tillot's work was rendered to a large extent transitory by the resistance of his material—Parma was less suitable than France for Colbertian economics—and by the disastrous rule of the later Dukes. He made some administrative mistakes, such as the farming out of the taxes, acted with a rather forced rapidity and kept the government too firmly centralised on himself; but during the period of his influence, which extended until his fall from power in 1771, Parma presented a remarkable, if somewhat illusory, picture of material prosperity, and with Tuscany and Piedmont was in signal contrast to the other decaying States of Italy.

Du Tillot was a Frenchman, of Parisian background, and was working for a thoroughly francophil Spaniard, who saw the reflection of his Bourbon blood less in his melancholic father and half-brother in Spain than in his first cousin and father-in-law, Louis XV of France. The spectacular glamour of the French Court and its culture—as exemplified by its tailoring—had taken hold on Philip, and he was determined to introduce to Parma the ceremoniousness of Versailles and the elegant ease of the Trianons. Regarding the duchy as essentially his private property, he was content to ignore the Italian traditions, and wished to impose bodily from above an entirely French re-education. Swarms of Frenchmen had accompanied him to his new dominion, and they were installed in all positions of government and influence, where they soon made themselves heartily disliked. Casanova passed through Parma in 1749, on his way to France with Henriette, and found in the streets a babel of French and Spanish. Going into a shop to buy haberdashery for Henriette he was offered an interpreter, and when he protested himself an Italian the woman of the shop cried out, "God be praised! Italians are scarce in these days". She declared the new fashions were "a bad mixture of French freedom and Spanish haughtiness, which addles our brains", and in this she was borne out by a humble cousin of Casanova, who complained bitterly of the new times for the curfew and Angelus: "All that is called a regulation, but do you know why? Because now everybody knows that dinner is to be eaten at twelve o'clock. A fine regulation indeed! Under the Farnese we used to eat when we were hungry, and that was much better."

It fell to Du Tillot to stage manage this transformation, and he had the wit to realise that this could not be effected by an army of *valets-de-chambre, friseurs, petits-maîtres* and what-not. In France he had been in contact with anti-clerical and *philosophe* circles, and he was resolved to make his rule a model of enlightenment on Encyclopedist lines. He did indeed succeed in attracting a large number of men of learning to Parma, who justified its Athenian title: Bettinelli, the erudite and worldly Jesuit, was superintendent of the College of Nobles from 1751 until 1759, with the Platonist Mazza and the mathematician Keralio as colleagues, and though the greatest *philosophes* could not be tempted away from France, Condillac came to superintend the education of

the Infant Ferdinand, the heir to the Duchy, born in January 1751.

Though Du Tillot possessed no really deep culture, with his Parisian background he was serenely opinionated on all artistic matters, and in 1752 took the typically French step of setting up an Academy of Fine Arts. The architect Petitot was called to embellish the city and to lay out the gardens of the Pilotta and at Colorno, while minor artists brought from France laboured to decorate the Duchess's apartments in true Parisian style. But Du Tillot's chief concern was the theatre. Louise Elisabeth never really became reconciled to her new home and made lengthy trips to Versailles to refresh herself at the fount of culture, and both she and Philip found their principal relaxation in the French plays, mainly comic, provided by an excellent company of actors kept at the Court expense. As far as they were concerned this state of affairs could and should continue. In 1752 an annual subsidy of 140,000 lire was assigned to the theatre, an example of the extravagance which by 1754 had already run the Court into debts of 264,000 French livres, and this sum probably represents the annual outlay on the French theatre alone, for the Carnival season of Italian opera at the Teatro Ducale was open to the public on the usual paying basis, and these receipts probably about balanced the cost.

However Du Tillot was not going to be content with the negative achievement of merely providing a satisfactory French theatre for his master. He made an attempt both in the spoken drama, and more noticeably in the opera to establish a compromise between French and Italian forms, a bid for artistic fame which, even if it was rooted less in real connoisseurship than in opinionated self-importance, is yet none the less praiseworthy for its results. In this he was several steps ahead of his French intellectual colleagues, and it may seem strange that a rather conventionally cultured man should make such a radical move. But there were precedents in the distinctly italophil trend of French intellectual and cultural life, and it only needed his move to Italy and the political necessity of reconciling an Italian State with a French government to precipitate action.

In the sphere of literature French *avant-garde* opinion on the whole recognised the superiority of its own drama, yet Voltaire in his preface to *Semiramis* (1748) had lavished unstinted praise on the dramas of Metastasio, "worthy of Corneille, when Corneille is not

declamatory, and of Racine, when Racine is not insipid". Nor did the French literary pundits withhold their approbation from the fecund and correct Arcadian versifiers, who in their turn coyly admitted their indebtedness to French models.

Concerning music the French *avant-garde* was much less patriotic, and the virulence of the attacks on the national music during the *guerre des bouffons* demonstrates the enthusiasm with which men such as Rousseau and Grimm espoused the Italian side. Though Du Tillot was not able to go all the way with these extremists, remaining always at heart a *Ramiste,* yet they must certainly have taught him that some reform of French opera was desirable, on artistic or fashionable grounds. Amid the dust of conflict at Paris the question of Italian versus French music assumed an "either-or" complexion, with a distinct bias of the intellectually fashionable towards the Italians, and it was not until 1774 that Gluck could demonstrate the *via media.* Such questions assumed a very real significance at Parma, a French Court in an Italian *milieu,* but away from the theatre of battle it was possible to attempt some compromise. There was thus a double inducement for Du Tillot to make this attempt, the political and strategic aspect, and the no less real pressure of the Parisian *coteries.* This was Du Tillot's chance to show himself the smartest of *philosophes,* and he had the principles already laid down for him in an important book, Algarotti's *Saggio sopra l'opera in musica,* published at Pisa in 1755. Algarotti, a francophil Italian hanger-on of Frederick the Great, had produced a remarkably sensible work, in which he advocated a simplification of the Metastasian convolutions of opera libretti, and the insertion of choruses and ballets linked to the plot in the French style. His book achieved a rapid circulation in Italy and was soon translated into other languages[1]—his ideas were echoed in 1760 by D'Alembert in his *La Liberté de la musique.* But by then Du Tillot was already putting these ideas into practice. For this he needed two men, a poet and a composer.

The poet was to hand. In the thirties Frugoni had found political events at Parma moving too rapidly even for his weather-cock ability, and after living in timid semi-retirement under the Austrians he had

[1] Translations were published at London in 1767, at Cassel in 1769 and at Paris in 1773.

left for Venice in 1742. He miscalculated his return to Parma in 1745, for it was almost immediately recaptured by the Austrians and he was disgraced; but perhaps this gave some pro-Spanish tinge to his helpless gyratings, for when Don Philip took possession in 1749 Frugoni was soon high in the Court favour, and poured out a flood of canzonets and sonnets which fell gratefully, if not altogether intelligibly, on the Ducal ears. In 1739 he had founded a Colony of the Arcadian Academy in Parma of which he was appointed Custodian, though the social leadership fell to the Marchese Sanvitale. This was, of course, under Austrian auspices, and the Arcadians had produced some very prettily turned verses for the accession of Maria Theresa and the birth of the Archduke Joseph: but in the winter of 1745-6 the Austrians had been so philistine as to cut down for forage the Arcadian Grove—the island on the fishpond where *Le Glorie d'Amore* had been performed—and so it was easy for the pastoral poetasters to transfer their allegiance. At the birth of the Infant Ferdinand in 1751 they all burst into song, and shortly afterwards Frugoni was made Preceptor in Italian Belles Lettres to the baby prince, with a salary of 100 zecchini a year. In February 1754 Du Tillot made him *Revisore degli Spettacoli* for the Ducal Theatre, with 6,000 lire a year, a post at first more or less honorary, and in 1760 came the final honour of the Secretaryship to the newly founded Academy of Fine Arts. It was plain that Frugoni's financial worries were past, and that he was firmly tied to the Bourbon interest at Parma.

The question of the musician was more difficult. The very sketchy *Cappella* of the last years of the Farnesi seems to have dissolved completely—Don Carlos, quite unmusical, would have made no attempt to preserve it—and since then the only permanent musicians at Parma would have been the obscure choirmasters and organists of the cathedral. When the Bourbon Court arrived in 1749 one Francesco Poncini was appointed *Maestro di Cappella* and teacher of singing and cembalo to the Duchess, probably on the strength of an *Artaserse* he had produced in 1736, but he remained completely obscure, his one further contribution being *Catone in Utica* in the Carnival of 1755-6.

Beginning with the Carnival of 1752-3 two *opere serie* were given regularly in the Teatro Ducale, but apart from Jommelli's *Demetrio* in

1750 they were revivals of works performed elsewhere, and were not specially written for Parma: the composers were a rather miscellaneous selection, and no particular musician seemed to be favoured.[1] Nor were the singers of any great note, though Manzuoli appeared in 1755 and Aprile in the following season. Du Tillot was evidently chary of laying hands on this sanctum of Italian sentiment, and the first innovations were very tentative, with a commission to Frugoni in 1755 to alter Metastasio's *Issipile* in the French style by the insertion of choruses and ballets, Galuppi's old setting being retained.

But in the next Carnival, that of 1756–7, Du Tillot struck out on a new line by dropping the *opera seria* altogether, and by falling back on *opera buffa* and ballet. In March 1756, at Du Tillot's invitation, Carlo Goldoni arrived in Parma from Venice. Already one of the most famous writers of comedies in Italy, he was presented to Philip at Colorno, where he saw for the first time a French comedy: in his Memoirs he records that he was particularly impressed by the natural style of acting, contrasting with the stylisation of the Commedia dell'Arte, and also by the silence in the theatre—though he himself infringed etiquette by applauding loudly at one point. During his nine months' stay in Parma Goldoni wrote three libretti, *La buona figliuola,*[2] *Il Viaggiatore ridicolo* and *Il Festino,* of which the first two later became very popular with composers, and Goldoni left Parma very much pleased with himself, having acquired the title of Poet to His Royal Highness and a pension of 3,000 lire. Unfortunately the composers of the music[3] did not match the author of the libretti and the operas as given were probably rather poor specimens—Goldoni himself mentions the inadequate performances—but they evidently made a considerable impression, for hitherto Parma had heard only a very few

[1] The operas performed in these years were: 1752–3, *Siroe,* Vinci; *Alessandro Re d'Epiro,* anon.; 1753–4, *Artaserse,* Caldara; *Demofoonte,* Mazzoni; 1754–5, *L'Olimpiade,* Duni; *Alessandro nell'Indie,* Galuppi; 1755–6, *Catone in Utica,* Poncini; *Issipile,* Galuppi.

[2] Goldoni had already written a comedy based on Richardson's *Pamela* in 1750.

[3] *La buona figliuola* was set by Duni, *Il Viaggiatore ridicolo* by Mazzoni and *Il Festino* by Ferradini. Piccinni's famous setting of *La buona figliuola* was not written until 1762.

comic operas. In addition to these Du Tillot produced six ballets,[1] arranged by the Ducal *maîtres de ballet* Nicolas Aubry and Philippe Delisle, principally for the benefit of the Duke's star *danseuse* Marie La Rivière, whose sparkling eyes and nimble feet had caused havoc at Court—Frugoni, in his spinsterish way, even had her elected an Arcadian.

Du Tillot's first really startling innovation came in the autumn of 1757, when he produced *Zélindor, Roi des Sylphes,* a favourite French fairy-opera, which was sung to the original music of Rebel and Francoeur. The libretto was printed with an Italian translation by Frugoni, but the cast was almost entirely French, and included the popular bass singer Caillot from Paris, and so it is probable that the opera was sung in that language.[2] This introduction to French light music—the most Italianate form—was followed by another new species, the *opéra-ballet: Gl'Inca del Perú,* the second *entrée* of Rameau's *Les Indes galantes,* was performed in December, again probably in French. These initial performances were more for the benefit of the foreign members of the Court and of the Parma nobility than for the bourgeois opera-goers, and in the Carnival of 1757-8 the theatre reverted to the ordinary *opera seria* with two undistinguished works by Di Maio and Ferradini,[3] graced by the appearance of Guadagni. The next autumn Du Tillot returned to the attack with two new French operas, the first a full-length *tragédie lyrique,* Rameau's *Castor et Pollux,* sung in French,[4] and the other Mondonville's *Titon et l'Aurore,* the performance of which at Paris in 1753 had been the major effort of the French party against the *bouffons.*

Such was the situation at the end of 1758 when Traetta, the new

[1] The titles of these ballets were *Aci e Galatea, Gli astronomi, I granatieri, I Savoiardi, I Cinesi* and *Ercole vinto da amore:* the composer of the music is not mentioned.

[2] Ferrari, *op. cit.,* gives only the Italian title of the work and the cast, letting it be implied that it was sung in Italian. See Note 1 on the next page.

[3] *Alessandro Severo* by Ferradini and *Ricimero Re de' Goti* by Di Maio—his first opera. Ferrari, *op. cit.,* is confused between Giovanni Ferrandini and Antonio Ferradini. The former lived principally in Munich, and neither Eitner nor Schmidl mentions any opera for Italy. Ferradini lived and worked almost entirely in North Italy.

[4] Rezzonico, *Memorie . . . di Frugoni.* See Note 1 on the next page.

Maestro di Cappella, arrived in Parma. Whether Du Tillot would have continued this policy of presenting French operas we cannot tell: but, we may doubt whether he would long have espoused an art-form which was becoming increasingly *démodé* in the Parisian intellectual coteries. The spectacular production and the excellent ballets in these operas made a great impression on the Italians, but the music and the singing, and above all the language, militated against a real appreciation by Italians, who were, after all, in the main perfectly content with their own *opera seria.* As a contemporary remarked about *Castor et Pollux,* the audience, though delighted with the variety and splendour of the scene, "only desired to hear so grand a spectacle translated into their own tongue and their own music".[1]

Tommaso Traetta was a Neapolitan by musical education, a product of that *Conservatorio di Santa Maria di Loreto* which had already produced masters such as Duni and Perez. He scored a considerable success with his first opera *Farnace,* produced at Naples in 1751 when he was only twenty-four, and in 1757 he conquered the two other principal operatic centres of Italy, Rome and Venice, with *Ezio* and *Didone abbandonata.* It was probably one of these works, or perhaps *Nitteti,* produced at Reggio in the same year, which brought Traetta to the notice of Du Tillot: whatever the circumstances, we must commend the perspicacity of the Minister or his musical advisers, for in these early works there was little to give promise of capabilities to realise Du Tillot's reforming ideas, or to compose works outside the ordinary genre of *opera seria.* It was probably simply as a rising young composer that Traetta was chosen, and the choice was singularly fortunate: in the autumn of 1758 Traetta arrived in Parma to take up the post of *Maestro di Cappella* to the Duke and of singing teacher to the two young Princesses. For the next seven years he was to remain in the service of the Parma Court, and these were to be the most fruitful years of his life, both numerically and artistically, for in this period he wrote twelve serious and four comic operas, including his greatest

[1] Rezzonico, *op. cit.* This decides the point as to the language in which *Castor et Pollux* was sung: Loewenberg states this correctly, but many other writers state or imply that it was sung in Italian, on the basis of the translated libretto. Loewenberg, however, states without mentioning his authority that *Titon* and *Zelindor* were sung in Italian.

masterpieces: even when he was director of music at the Court of St. Petersburg from 1769 until 1774, under much more brilliant circumstances, he only rose once, in *Antigona,* to the level he had reached during this Parma period.

Since he was heavily committed to other cities besides Parma on his arrival,[1] Traetta had no time to go to any particular lengths for his new employer, and in the Carnival he produced a perfectly ordinary *opera seria, Solimano.* But he certainly heard the performances of the two French operas, of which that by Rameau was the most important for him, since Du Tillot now intended a direct transmutation of that type of opera into Italian terms. He commissioned Frugoni to translate and arrange *Hippolyte et Aricie,* a libretto by the Abbé Pellegrin with which Rameau had scored his first great operatic success in 1733. Frugoni declared to Algarotti that he had found Pellegrin's tragedy very poor, and that he had been obliged to add lines from Racine, but in fact he made few alterations, and contented himself with an almost literal translation in his usual mellifluous Italian verse. But the arrangement of this libretto was very much in the Italian form, with long stretches of recitative, accompanied and *secco,* arias and choruses, and the principal signs of its French origins are the choral scenes and the ballet inserted in the acts as a part of the general dramatic action. Algarotti, who would have liked Frugoni to use one of the plots outlined in his own *Saggio,* kept in close touch with the poet all the time the opera was being written, and when it was finished he was unstinting in his praise, declaring that Frugoni had equalled Racine in the expression of Phaedra's sentiments, and vowing that he would invite all his friends to the performance.

This performance took place on May 9th 1759, to an audience consisting of the Court and of the nobility and gentry of North Italy who had heard rumours of this new experiment. *Ippolito ed Aricia* was a splendid success, and performances continued right into the summer, so pressing were the connoisseurs who flocked to Parma to see this new thing: and the impression which the opera made can be summed up in the words of a Count Paradisi, who wrote to Algarotti in July,

[1] During the autumn and Carnival of 1758–9 Traetta also wrote *L'Olimpiade* for Verona, *Demofoonte* for Mantua, and a good *opera buffa, Buovo d'Antona* for Venice.

"I have been to the opera at Parma, where I found much to afford complete satisfaction. The music in particular struck me, and it seems that the road is now open to repeat those artistic wonders of which the Greeks so boasted".[1] This favourable impression was doubtless caused by the combination of novel and conservative elements in the opera. The singers were all Italian, and included a *castrato* Elisi, a tenor, Amorevoli, and a splendid soprano, Caterina Gabrielli; they sang in an idiom that was scarcely different from that of the conventional *opera seria*, yet the plot was simple, the dramatic action underlined, and free from the tiresome Metastasian intrigues and sub-intrigues: in addition there was the entirely new dramatic handling of the choruses and of the ballets, which were danced by the pupils of the Ducal School of Ballet, founded two years previously, and there was the sumptuous scenery by Francesco Grassi, on which Du Tillot had spared no expense. All these factors added up to an artistic success, which Traetta deserved, for he had taken great trouble over the music, and had studied the original score of Rameau, from whom he borrowed a certain amount of ballet music. But as might be expected in a first venture, Traetta was still not sure of himself, and was liable to fall back merely on pleasing melody, so that while recognising its importance and its merited success, we must reckon *Ippolito ed Aricia* below some of the later works.

It is worth digressing for a moment at this point to make the acquaintance of Caterina Gabrielli, whom we have just mentioned. This remarkable singer, who was known by the unflattering nickname of *La Coccbetta,* since her father had been a cook, was famous in Italy at this time as much for her splendid voice as for her extraordinary caprices. Though she had made her début when in the late forties, her voice had already taken her round the principal cities of Italy, and abroad to Vienna, and wherever she went she added a new anecdote to the legend of her gallantry and her wilfulness. In Vienna she played off the French and Portuguese Ambassadors against each other, until the Frenchman, maddened by love and rage, drew his sword on her and inflicted some superficial wound: but at the sight of her blood and at the sound of her screams he was so overcome that he knelt down

[1] Quoted in Italian in Goldschmidt's Introduction to the volume on Traetta, *Denkmäler Deutscher Tonkunst,* Series 2, Jahrg. 14, Vol. 1.

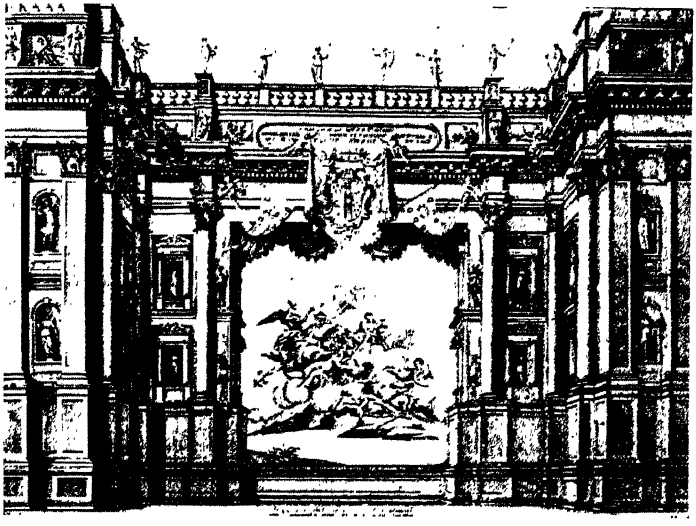
and offered her the offending weapon—which she accepted and had inscribed on it *Epée de M.... qui osa frapper La Gabrielli.* It was notorious that she would sing well only if her lover of the moment was in the theatre, and it became quite a risk to engage her to sing at all. But in 1757 she sang in Traetta's *Didone abbandonata* at Venice, and promptly contracted a curious fixation on the composer, who seems to have been neither gallant by nature nor very attractive in appearance. However Gabrielli followed him everywhere,[1] singing the leading roles in all his operas, and he was indeed fortunate to have such a magnificent interpreter always at hand: she even went to join him at St. Petersburg in 1772, where she created the title role in his *Antigona,* at the price of losing her voice through the rigorous climate. Her passion was apparently never returned, and when she was at Parma she set the city by its ears as usual: it was rumoured that she even repulsed the too-amorous Duke with the epithet *gobbo maladetto,* "accursed hunchback".

In December 1759 the Duchess Louise died suddenly, while on a visit to Versailles, and the Court mourning closed the theatres for the Carnival; so it was not until the spring of 1760 that Du Tillot could commission another work from Frugoni and Traetta. This time the choice fell on Bernard's *Castor et Pollux,* which Frugoni had already translated when the Rameau setting was performed in 1758:[2] but now Frugoni recast it as *I Tintaridi* and it was performed with Traetta's music in the middle of May.[3] The libretto of *I Tintaridi* represents a much more satisfactory compromise between the French and Italian forms than did that of *Ippolito ed Aricia:* for one thing, Bernard's libretto hinged on the very Metastasian motive of magnanimity and friendship, with a reduced emphasis on the supernatural, and for another, Frugoni was less radical in his arrangement of the work, keeping the large choral and solo ensemble scenes, which were such an

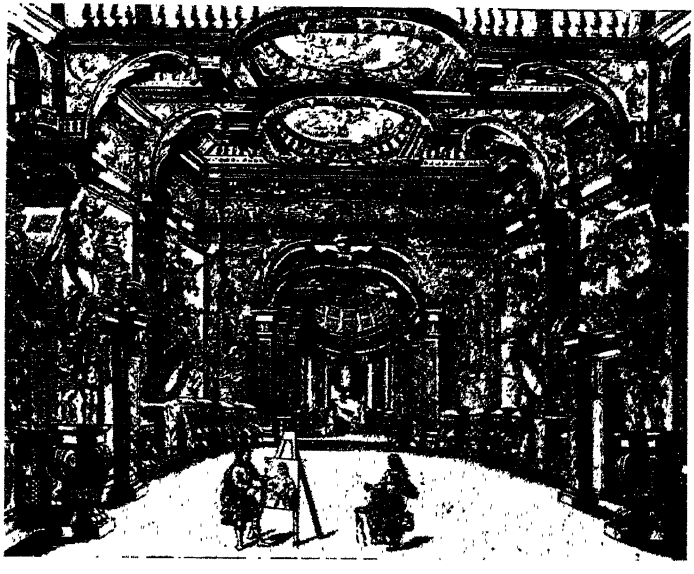
[1] One of the reasons for Sonnleithner's assertion that Traetta's *Ifigenia* was given at Vienna in 1758 was that Gabrielli was there at the time.

[2] In 1758 Frugoni translated the original version of Rameau's libretto: in 1760 he adapted the second version, produced at Paris in 1754.

[3] The date is usually given as April, but Equini (*C. I. Frugoni alle corti dei Farnesi e dei Borboni di Parma*), quotes a letter from Frugoni of April 22nd, in which he asserts the intention is "to stage the work on the 15th of May next".



1. Proscenium of the Teatro Farnese.



2. Set from *Il Favore degli Dei* (Parma 1690). The tenor is whimsically portrayed painting the soprano

3. Philip Bourbon, Infante of Spain and Duke of Parma

excellent feature of French opera. Traetta, too, was less tentative in his music, although he again borrowed some ballet music from Rameau; in places he even improved on the original, as in the scene of the Elysian fields, where with Italian penetration he portrayed the agitation in the soul of Castor, while Rameau had only depicted the unhappy flittings of the shades. Here at last was the real "reform" work, the golden mean between the two styles, which now had only to be worked out more fully.

Traetta crowned this achievement with a work in a lighter vein, *Le Feste d'Imeneo,* performed on September 3rd 1760, as the gala opera for the wedding of Philip's elder daughter Isabella to the Archduke Joseph, heir to the Holy Roman Empire. For such occasions it was usual outside France to perform an ordinary *opera seria* with a congratulatory *licenza* at the end; but for this brilliant marriage Du Tillot chose the French form of the *opéra-ballet,* which was much more suitable as an occasional work, since it consisted of separate acts or *entrées* quite unconnected in plot, but each devoted to the celebration in aria and ballet of an Art, a Virtue or some other abstraction. *Le Feste d'Imeneo* consisted of a prologue and three acts, the *Atti di Iris, di Saffo* and *di Eglé,* in which the Princess was celebrated as protectress of painting, poetry and dancing. Though the last two acts were based on part of Gauthier's libretto for Rameau's *Les Fêtes d'Hébé* (1739), on the whole Frugoni had a much freer hand than in the two previous operas, and he was able to give full rein to his talent for flattering canzonets. Traetta, too, was less obliged to think of his French counterparts, though the ballet music still shows distinct French influence: but for melodic charm and freshness one Italian was worth five Frenchmen, and Traetta concocted a bewitching score of gay dance music and arias of alternate brilliance and tenderness, some with *obbligati* for cello, mandoline and horns. The singers were worthy of the opera, and included the soprano Maria Masi-Giura, on leave from Jommelli's opera at Stuttgart, the tenor Tibaldi, and the great *castrato* Guadagni.

The performance of *Le Feste d'Imeneo* had unexpected and far-reaching results, for the Archduke Joseph, an enthusiastic and discriminating lover of music, procured from Count Durazzo, the Intendant of the Vienna opera, a commission for Traetta to produce an opera there for the next Carnival. The libretto chosen was *Armida,*

sketched by Durazzo himself and versified by Migliavacca, a pupil and imitator of Metastasio: it offered nothing particularly new in the way of expression or treatment, and there was unfortunately little stimulus for Traetta to display his newly-found capabilities. He went to Vienna to direct the rehearsals and performance of the work—for the Parma Court could not stand on its rights against its grand in-laws—*Armida* was very well received, and deservedly for it was an excellent work within its own conventional limits.[1]

Traetta gained in Vienna more than fame and money, namely, the acquaintance of Gluck, who was at that moment in a curiously intermediate stage in his career, arranging and re-writing French *opéras comiques* for the Court theatres. But with Durazzo, the poet Calzabigi and the choreographer Angiolini, Gluck was already meditating those dramatic reforms which were to lead to the ballet *Don Juan* in October 1761, and to the famous *Orfeo* a year later. Through Durazzo, Traetta was certainly received into this circle, and he cannot but have been affected by the atmosphere of discussion, even if, as an Italian, he was inclined less to cerebration and theory than to direct experiment. His personal and musical relationship to Gluck will be mentioned later; suffice it to say here that when the two men met at Vienna in 1760 there was no question of a master-pupil relationship on either side, for if one can apply some sort of artistic measuring-tape, their achievements appear almost exactly equal.

The success of *Armida* opened for Traetta, whose work had hitherto been confined to Italy, a whole field of activity north of the Alps. In November 1762, a month after the production of *Orfeo* at Vienna, which he may have heard on his way from Italy, Traetta produced a new masterpiece, *Sofonisba,* at Mannheim, where Ignaz Holzbauer, the *Kapellmeister* of the Elector Palatine Charles Theodore, was pursuing an enlightened policy of commissioning operas from prominent Italian composers—Jommelli and Di Maio had already written remarkable works for Mannheim. *Sofonisba,* on a rather weak libretto by the Palatine Court poet Matteo Verazi, was outwardly an ordinary *opera seria,* without foreign connections, but in it Traetta showed how much he had learnt from the French models which he had been obliged to study: the pregnant recitatives, the richness of

[1] It was revived at Naples in 1763 and at Venice in 1767.

the harmony and orchestration, the psychological development of the characters, the solos, choruses and ballets welded into long and complex ensembles, all show the influence of Rameau united to a sensibility, a melodic beauty, a brilliance and a tenderness which are all Italian.

Sofonisba was followed by *Ifigenia in Tauride,* produced at Schönbrunn in October 1763.[1] All that has been said of the earlier opera can be repeated for *Ifigenia,* though it is considered musically a little weaker: however, the libretto was an improvement, being by Marco Coltellini, a pupil both of Metastasio and Calzabigi, and an exponent of reforming simplicity and directness in the dramatic action. But *Ifigenia* is of particular interest, for Gluck is certain to have heard it, he was in Vienna at the time of its performance, and in his own *Iphigénie en Tauride,* produced nearly sixteen years later in 1769, he echoed Traetta's music in the scene where the Furies rise to disturb the dreams of Orestes, who cries out in his terror.

Sofonisba and *Ifigenia* are by far the most important works of Traetta during this period, and as they were produced at Mannheim and Vienna, we seem to have wandered far from Parma, the subject of this chapter. In so doing we have but followed Traetta himself, who suddenly ceased to produce important work for Parma after *Le Feste d'Imeneo.* Between 1760 and 1765 he produced there only one serious opera, *Enea e Lavinia,* and two comic operas, *La Francese a Malghera* and *La buona figliuola:* of these only the first, performed in the spring of 1761, is of any particular importance, being after an old French libretto by Fontenelle, translated by Sanvitale, with long ballets and a brilliant part for the inevitable Gabrielli. In addition Traetta wrote five other perfectly conventional *opere serie* for various cities in North Italy,[2] which are as disconcerting in contrast to his

[1] The date of *Ifigenia* was long accepted (e.g., by Goldschmidt, *op. cit.*) as 1758, on the basis of Sonnleithner's catalogue of operas at Vienna. But no libretto is known earlier than 1763 and Loewenberg points out that in the libretto of that date it states "*. . . il presente dramma sia stato composto espressamente . . . per questa occasione*". The question is of some importance in connection with Traetta's relations to Gluck.

[2] *Enea nel Lazio* for Turin (Carnival 1760): *Zenobia* for Lucca (Autumn 1761): *Alessandro nell'Indie* for Reggio (1762): *Antigono* for Padua (June 1764): *Semiramide* for Venice, Teatro San Cassiano (Carnival 1765).

German masterpieces as are Gluck's frequent lapses during this same period.

It is evident that the impetus behind Traetta's first works at Parma had suddenly disappeared. During these five years Traetta certainly spent much time abroad, making long trips to Germany in the autumn of 1760, 1762 and 1763, but this was only with the official permission of the Duke, and if it was difficult to disoblige the Imperial Court at Vienna, Philip could have stood on his dignity without difficulty against Mannheim. In addition there were long periods, such as the whole of 1764, when Traetta was virtually inactive at Parma, and if in the winter of 1758-9 he could write five full-length operas culminating in *Ippolito ed Aricia,* in the next five years at Parma he could obviously have produced more if it had been required of him.

No, the explanation for his inactivity lies not in his physical conditions, but in the artistic direction to which he was subject; and herein lies the mystery. Philip did not seem excessively to miss his wife—and indeed is said to have become preoccupied with the Gabrielli—nor was he showing signs of the paralysing melancholy of his father and step-brother. Du Tillot was firmly fixed in the seat of government and was continuing his reforms with unabated zeal, as witness his Academy of Fine Arts, founded in 1760. He had always taken a rather busy-body interest in his theatre, prescribing details of scenery and costumes, and outlining plots act by act for the benefit of Frugoni, even attempting choreography in the ballet *Anacreonte:* but after *Enea e Lavinia,* which seems to have fallen rather flat, he suddenly lost interest, and in 1763 he handed over the direction of the theatre to Count Sanvitale, the head of the Arcadians in Parma. The opera repertory relapsed back into conventionality—*opera buffa* in the Carnivals and *opera seria* in the spring; but the latter were either quite conventional novelties, such as J. C. Bach's *Catone in Utica* (1763), or else revivals, such as Traetta's *Didone abbandonata* (1764), and when Sanvitale went to the trouble of arranging Racine's *Bajazet* as a libretto, he entrusted it to the mediocre Venetian Bertoni (1765).

But the description of the actual events does not dispose of the mystery, nor is there any solution evident. Goldschmidt does not consider that there was any diminution of interest in the reform opera

at Parma, and suggests that the inactivity of Traetta was due to a coldness between him and Frugoni, whose artistic limits the composer had over-stepped in *Sofonisba*. But Frugoni, who was no musician, could not have objected to the music of *Sofonisba* (which in any case he never heard), and would almost certainly have approved of Verazi's rather flaccid and Metastasian poem. A more likely suggestion is a coldness between Traetta and Du Tillot, who may well have been offended at his composer's obvious anxiety to write operas for other and more brilliant courts. But it remains curious that a man as vain intellectually as Du Tillot should not have been moved to emulate at Parma the success which Traetta had obtained at Vienna and Mannheim, and even if this success had been gained within the framework of the old *opera seria,* it was up to Du Tillot and Frugoni to point the way again with French models. When all is said and done, it is impossible to give any reason for this collapse of the Parma "reform" opera, apparently in full blossom: perhaps when some patient investigator has elucidated the internal stresses and strains of this period, more light will be thrown on this curious problem.

Traetta enjoyed one last success at Parma when *Ippolito ed Aricia* was revived in the spring of 1765 as the festival opera for the marriage of Philip's daughter Maria Louisa to her first cousin Charles, Prince of the Asturias, son of Charles III of Spain. This brilliant match, which was intended to offset the abortive Habsburg alliance of five years previously—Isabella had died in 1761—was celebrated with the utmost pomp, even if Traetta was not commissioned to write a new opera. But *Ippolito ed Aricia* made such an impression that Charles III, who was normally the stingiest of monarchs, granted Traetta a life pension. In June, Maria Louisa left for Spain and Philip went with her as far as Alessandria: here he was smitten with small-pox and on July 18th he died, so suddenly and obscurely as to give rise to a macabre legend that he had been torn to pieces by his hounds while hunting.

Philip's death made little difference politically at Parma, where Du Tillot was firmly in power, but almost immediately Traetta departed—a sign that he was not in favour with the Minister—and took up the post of *Maestro* at the Ospedaletto at Venice. Here he remained for three years, apart from a visit to Munich in 1767, but

in the summer of 1768 he left to become *Maestro di Cappella* at St. Petersburg, a post just vacated by Galuppi. He bore the rigours of the Russian climate for nearly six years, but fled at last in 1774. Returning via London, where his *Germondo* failed miserably, he finally retired to his post at Venice, where he died on April 6th 1779.

Only once after he left Parma did he rise to his former heights, in the magnificent *Antigona,* on a libretto by Coltellini, produced at St. Petersburg in 1772; and looking at his career as a whole we are forced to admit that it was a failure. Traetta preserves a precarious existence in musical history books as a "forerunner" or "influence" on Gluck, and he is quite outside the consciousness of the ordinary amateur of music. So it is easy not to realise how nearly he rivalled Gluck in his own day. When the two men met in 1760 they were on a parity of achievement; in fact, if anything, Traetta had the advantage, for he had already produced two operas of a new type, whereas Gluck's exploits were more potential than actual. But after *Orfeo* in 1762, Gluck's course lay straight ahead, through *Alceste* to the triumphs of his Parisian operas; and when Traetta died in 1779, exactly six weeks before the production of *Iphigénie en Tauride,* he was fast becoming obscured by the fame of his great contemporary—had not his *Ifigenia* been billed in 1777 as "sure to please, since it is new at Naples and composed in the style of *Orfeo*"?[1] There is abundant other evidence[2] that during his lifetime Traetta was considered as an Italian counterpart of Gluck—Grimm, in his *Correspondence littéraire,* mentions the attempts at operatic reform at Parma as being parallel to those at Vienna—yet even by the end of his life he was being relegated to the position of "the most successful Italian approach to Gluck", or some such diminutive classification.

There are three reasons for Traetta's failure in his own career and in his position *vis-à-vis* Gluck. In the first place, there were the circumstances of Traetta's life during the most crucial period of his musical development. After a brilliant start at Parma, the visit to Vienna in 1760 for *Armida* served only to unsettle him, and despite the success of his operas at Mannheim and Vienna he in effect fell between two

[1] "... *l'Ifigenia di Traetta, che dovrebbe piacere, essendo nuova in Napoli, tessuto sul gusto del'Orfeo.*" Croce, *Teatri di Napoli.*

[2] For a discussion of this see Goldschmidt, *op. cit.*

stools, never obtaining a really firm hold in Germany, as Jommelli had succeeded in doing, and in addition losing effective employment at Parma. Furthermore, he was never able to escape from the burden of providing conventional *opere serie* for Italian cities, and while Gluck also relapsed into convention right up to 1769 (*Le Feste d'Apollo*), on the whole he remained single-minded in his artistic creations after *Alceste* in 1767.

This brings us to the second factor in Traetta's failure, namely, the inconclusiveness of his own character. His personality never really emerges from the comparatively few details known about his life, but he seems to have been amiable, conciliatory, at times lazy; in short, rather weak. The Neapolitan musical training, though excellent in itself, and the general conditions of operatic life in Italy asserted that the first duty of a composer was to please his public or his patron, and this emphasis on the line of least resistance was naturally inimical to revolution or even reform. Traetta, aided by his own musicality, faithfully carried out Du Tillot's ideas, or Durazzo's or Coltellini's ideas, but left to himself he fell back on mere urbanity, so that his life after 1765 was one long *decrescendo*.[1] Gluck, on the other hand, possessed a personality as impressive and rugged as that of Handel before or Beethoven after him. After *Orfeo* in 1762 he imposed himself quite firmly on musical history, with every step thoroughly calculated, and in this he was aided by a natural showmanship, an ability to ratiocinate on the excellence of his own works reminiscent of Wagner: before this flame Traetta's gentle light burned pale indeed.

Thus we arrive at the third and most important factor, the indisputable superiority of Gluck over Traetta as a composer of opera. On purely musical grounds the reverse might be argued: Traetta had probably greater technical ability and certainly a greater natural gift of melody, in which Gluck was rather deficient. But in his easy-going Italian way Traetta had never really got to grips with the problem of operatic reform, and in his five masterpieces he had gone only half way towards the solution which Gluck had reached in one bound. Even in his best works there are moments when Traetta falls back on mere melodiousness and grace, just as Gluck may retreat on to thick chordal harmony and four-square rhythm: but Traetta always

[1] Except for *Antigona*, which was again inspired by Coltellini.

retained a certain diffuseness, and the Furies in his *Ifigenia* are for that reason decidedly less impressive than the Eumenides in *Iphigénie en Tauride*. When all is said and done, it is fascinating to speculate on the results if the Parisian intellectuals had invited Traetta instead of Piccinni (who never wrote a *Sofonisba*) to compete with Gluck. Certainly the contest would have been more even, and it is probable that greater works would have been thrown up on the Italian side: Traetta and Gluck were in so many ways complementary, each had so much to learn from the other, that one might even imagine greater masterpieces created by their mutual interaction. Yet while one was triumphing in Paris the other was mouldering in Venice.

After the departure of Traetta the musical history of Parma ceases to be significant or interesting. The new Duke Ferdinand, who was only fourteen at his father's death, had been educated to be a philosopher-king, and Condillac, Bettinelli, Frugoni and others had hammered into him the most enlightened maxims, the most liberal culture, the most extensive smatterings of the arts, the classics and the sciences—had not Condillac's *Cours d'Etudes* occupied thirteen large volumes? But instead of a philosopher Ferdinand had turned into a religious bigot of the most extreme sort. In the engagingly naive *Storia della mia Vita,* which he compiled in 1770 when he was nineteen, Ferdinand describes how since the age of ten he had always longed to be a Dominican: when he was thirteen he painted the Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary high up on the wall of his study, and arranged the furniture to represent a private oratory, the tables and chairs being the altars, and empty inkstands doing service for bells. When he became Duke, Ferdinand could gratify this passion more authentically, and often in the evening he would trot round from his palace to the church of St. Peter Martyr to ring the Angelus.

It might be thought that with a Duke of this stamp Du Tillot could do exactly as he pleased with the Duchy, and for the first four years of his reign Ferdinand gave no trouble. But soon the question of his marriage arose, for Ferdinand did not subscribe to religious celibacy, and there had been several distressing episodes when he went to "help" the peasant girls harvest their maize. Du Tillot wanted the Duke to marry Maria Beatrice d'Este, the heiress to the neighbouring Duchy of Modena; but Austria had already got her eye on

Modena and without ado Maria Theresa produced one of her numerous Archduchesses, the sixth, Maria Amalia.

For this marriage there was staged at Parma the last of the great Court festivals, held in August 1769 and described with loving care in a book published at Parma in the same year.[1] In the beautiful engravings after Petitot we can see the pseudo-mediaeval costumes of the knights and squires who executed quadrilles on horseback—a late echo of the Farnese *tornei*—and the fanciful Chinese fair, with caravans from Mongolia, Japan, Java and Tartary, which kept the citizens amused. Then for the Court there was a great *fête champêtre* called *Les Bergères d'Arcadie,* held on the island in the Farnese fish-pond, where the bosquets were tricked out with statuary and rustic altars. The Ducal pair, named for the occasion Daphnis and Phyllis, danced with the other Court shepherds to a band of *musettes;* then Pan and Echo came forward to sing their praises, giving place in their turn to a rustic ballet.

The centre piece of the celebrations was the opera *Le Feste d'Apollo,* produced on the 24th, which formed a sort of counterpart to *Le Feste d'Imeneo* of nine years previously. But now Traetta was gone and Gluck was called from Vienna to triumph in the place of his old rival. *Le Feste d'Apollo,* constructed rather on the lines of the French *opéra-ballet,* consisted of a prologue and three acts, the *Atti di Filemone e Bauci, di Aristeo* and *d'Orfeo:* only the first three parts were ostensibly new—even for these Gluck had drawn heavily on earlier works of his[2]—and the last act was the famous *Orfeo* reduced to seven scenes and sung without a break. Among the singers were the sopranos Girelli Aguilar and Lucrezia Agujari, famous for her incredible range, extending to C *in altissimo.* The protagonist in *Orfeo* was the *castrato* Millico, who is said to have wept when he saw his part, proclaiming that his enemies were trying to take away his reputation;

[1] *Feste Celebrate in Parma per le Nozze del Reale Infante Duca Ferdinando di Borbone con S. A. R. l'Arciduchessa d'Austria Maria Amalia, l'Anno MDCCLXIX.*

[2] Such as *Ippolito, Ezio, Il Re Pastore, Cythere assiégée, La Corona, Semiramide* and *Telemacco,* which furnished no less than seven numbers. Of the music newly composed, Gluck used the symphony of *Filemone* in the fifth act of *Armide,* and the chorus *Lodi eterne* in *Filemone* became the chorus of Lesbian women in *Iphigénie en Tauride.*

but he, like the other singers and the audience, was so moved at the actual performance that he became one of the firmest of Gluck's adherents, and went back to Vienna with him, where he became the singing master of Gluck's dearly loved niece Marianne.

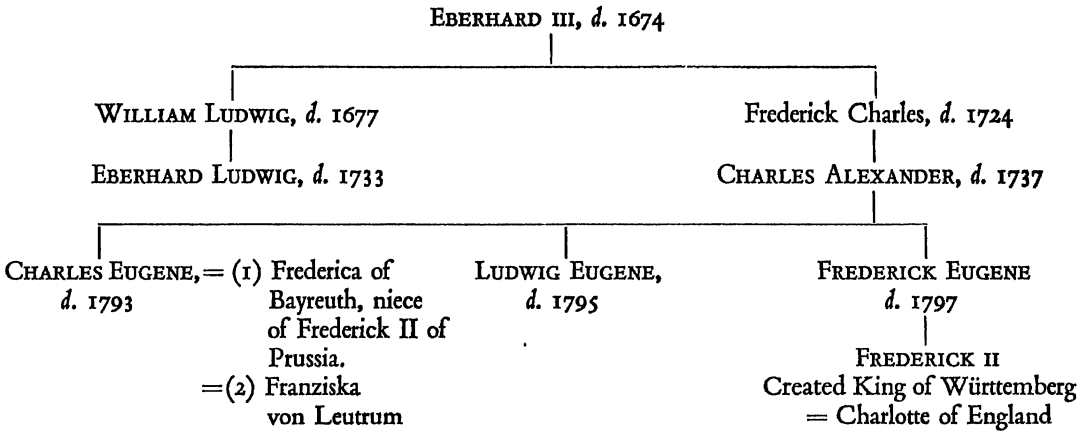
This marriage was Du Tillot's undoing. Maria Amalia united the indiscretion of her sister Marie Antoinette to the vulgarity of her sister Maria Carolina of Naples, without their qualities of majesty or amiability, and to this combination she added bad temper, pride, and an indomitable energy of her own. Ferdinand, weak and complaisant, was helpless before this harpy, and in a trice Maria Amalia had gained control of the Court. Without ado she set up her own Austrian opposition to Du Tillot, who was backed by the Bourbon interest, and in November 1771 he was ignominiously dismissed. Henceforward, Parma was ruled by Maria Amalia's own favourites, along with Ferdinand's darling clerics. Du Tillot's fall signified more than the end of a political régime: the little band of *philosophes* had scattered, Frugoni had died in 1768 and his successor Rezzonico, after surviving at Court for twenty years, was finally dismissed in 1790 for religious unorthodoxy. Traetta had gone, and his place as official *Maestro di Cappella* was taken by a nonentity named Giuseppe Colla, whose only merit was in being the husband of Agujari. The opera slipped into a perfectly conventional rut of serious and comic works, quite undistinguished from the repertoire of any other provincial Italian city. The Athens of Italy was no more, and as Ferdinand tinkled his Mass bells and worked out new and ever more elaborate religious ceremonies wherewith to pass his time, the curtain of bigotry fell across the scene.

PART TWO

*

CHARLES EUGENE OF WÜRTTEMBERG

DUKES OF WÜRTTEMBERG


EBERHARD III, d. 1674
WILLIAM LUDWIG, d. 1677
Frederick Charles, d. 1724
EBERHARD LUDWIG, d. 1733
CHARLES ALEXANDER, d. 1737
CHARLES EUGENE, d. 1793
(1) Frederica of Bayreuth, niece of Frederick II of Prussia.
(2) Franziska von Leutrum
LUDWIG EUGENE, d. 1795
FREDERICK EUGENE d. 1797
FREDERICK II
Created King of Württemberg
= Charlotte of England

Dukes of Württemberg shewn in capitals

II

CHARLES EUGENE OF WÜRTTEMBERG

IN the small principality of Württemberg, the sixteen years between 1753 and 1769 form one of the most remarkable periods in the musical history of the Eighteenth Century. During this time the opera found in Stuttgart and Ludwigsburg a home comparable to Bayreuth in the next century, and in Duke Charles Eugene of Württemberg a patron as impassioned as Ludwig II, while less erratic and unbalanced. But there the comparison ceases, for Niccolò Jommelli, unlike Wagner, was no revolutionary genius, demanding and finally obtaining the almost ideal conditions under which his art could function; and was more akin to Brahms, the last great exponent of a conservative tradition. Jommelli took the classical *opera seria,* as did Brahms the symphony, and expanded it to the point at which another touch would cause it to collapse by its own internal stress. He demanded no conditions to be created for him; but he found them willingly provided by a Duke who did not scruple to outrage the constitution of his country and to burden his subjects with taxes in order to support Jommelli with as magnificent an opera as could be mustered. Whether Charles Eugene had in view merely his own glory, or whether he really strove to achieve an artistic ideal is an open question. In him, as in so many of his contemporaries, simple hedonism and artistic discernment were inextricably mingled. It is fruitless to impute motives: what is important to posterity is that Charles Eugene, by patronising Jommelli, was indirectly responsible for the creation of a handful of masterpieces.

At the end of the Seventeenth Century, Stuttgart showed no sign of its future brilliance. The Court of the Duke Eberhard Ludwig was indistinguishable from any other of the petty Courts that bespattered the Empire—poor, dull and provincial, and proportionately devoted

to the minutiæ of etiquette. In distant imitation of Versailles a ballet was produced once a year for the Duke's birthday, providing the courtiers with an opportunity to don mythological costume and display their proficiency in dancing. But though these ballets must have afforded some relief from the monotonous round of the Lutheran services, they were merely put together by one of the Ducal musicians, and were musically quite undistinguished. The first composer of any note to appear in Stuttgart was Johann Sigismund Cousser, who arrived in 1698 and in April 1700 was appointed *Ober-Kapellmeister*. Cousser had studied for six years in Paris with Lully, and was among the best of the German opera composers of the time. Between 1698 and 1701 he produced several of his operas in Stuttgart, and also works by Steffani and others, all of them sung in German;[1] but he quarrelled with the local musicians, and in March 1704 he left Wurttemberg in disgust.

The next thirty years are a period of some obscurity. It is thought that operas were still given intermittently at Stuttgart, for the *Kapelle,* which under Cousser numbered over thirty musicians, continued to expand, indicating a commensurate musical activity; but no details are known. Italian influence also became apparent. About 1711 one Brescianello was appointed *Concertmeister,* and twenty years later the same post was occupied by one of the Toeschi family, which was later to flourish at Mannheim. The Italian faction was strong enough to defeat Reinhold Keiser, who arrived in 1719 and hoped to be appointed *Kapellmeister* on the strength of a serenata he had written for the Duke's birthday; but in this he was disappointed, and in 1722 he left for Copenhagen. Eberhard Ludwig died in 1733 and the throne passed to his cousin Charles Alexander. Under the new Duke the life of the Court became more splendid; by 1737 the sums spent on the *Kapelle* had increased by half and there were 63 musicians, many of them Italians. In November 1736 Riccardo Broschi, the brother of Farinelli, was appointed *compositore di musica,* and in the following Carnival his *Adriano in Siria* was performed in the opera house, which had been redecorated for the occasion.

But these four years of gaiety were premature, for on the death of Charles Alexander in March 1737 the State finances were found to be

[1] Except for Steffani's *Li Rivali Concordi* in 1699.

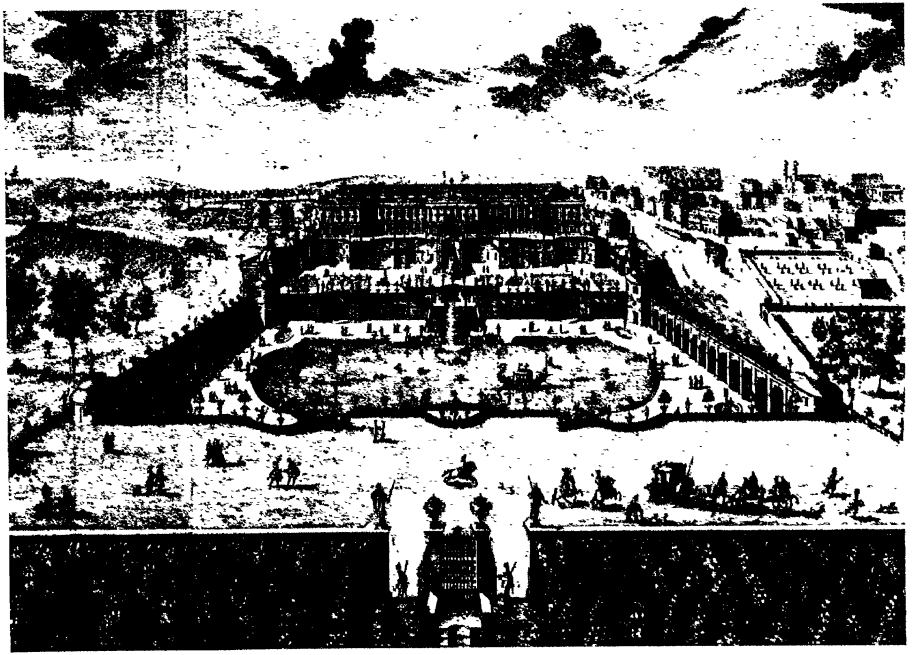
badly shaken and economies were necessary in every sphere. Almost immediately the greater part of the *Kapelle* was dismissed and the musicians found themselves precipitated into virtual destitution, for their dismissal was quite unexpected and they had had no time in which to find posts elsewhere. After a memorial had been drawn up setting out their plight, in 1738 the *Kapelle* was reconstituted on modest lines, with eight singers, thirteen instrumentalists and two organists, under the direction of Brescianello as *Ober-Kapellmeister;* orders were also given that the expenses of the *Kapelle* should not exceed 5,000 gulden a year. Thus when Charles Eugene, the eldest son of Charles Alexander, came to the throne, a tradition of Italian music had been established at Stuttgart, and even if at this moment the actual *Kapelle* was in eclipse, in view of the expansive tastes of the new Duke, it was unlikely to remain long in this state.

Charles Eugene was only nine years old when he became Duke, and for the first seven years of his reign the country was governed by a Regency. The second Regent, Duke Charles Frederick of Württemberg-Oels, decided to loosen the traditional ties which bound Wurttemberg to Austria, and to strengthen those with Prussia. Accordingly, in 1741 Charles Eugene was sent to Berlin to complete his education. Frederick the Great was naturally flattered at this mark of respect, and wrote for his young ward the *Miroir des Princes,* a more than usually hypocritical discourse on the duties of a ruler, and the follies of aggressive war. Charles Eugene absorbed this teaching with such docility and showed such brilliant promise that Frederick persuaded the Emperor Charles VII to declare him of age in 1744, when he was but sixteen. To cement this Prussian alliance Charles Eugene married in 1748 Frederick's niece, Princess Frederica of Bayreuth, daughter of the Margravine Wilhelmina, a lively young woman, who inherited the taste of her uncle and her mother for the theatre and music: but this was to be her undoing, for she introduced Charles Eugene not only to opera, but also to opera singers.

Charles Eugene was in every way a brilliant young man. Handsome and gifted, he shone even among the bright constellation of the European royalty of his time. He was tall and well made, and although his head was a little too small for his body, his face was alert and sensitive, with rather large blue eyes and a sharp inquisitive

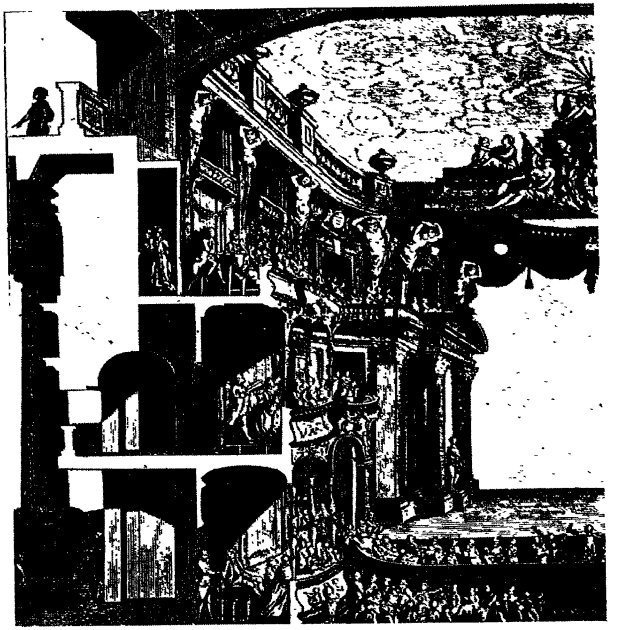
nose. He moved with elegance and a natural dignity, he could act to perfection the part of a ruler, and to these graces he added a charm of manner and an address exceptional even in that courtly age. The superficial culture which was an essential part of every European ruler was in him deepened by real enthusiasm and discrimination. He corresponded urbanely with Voltaire, and even persuaded the suspicious philosopher to invest his capital in Württemberg. History was his particular passion, and on his frequent journeys over Europe he was indefatigable in visiting libraries and collections of antiquities. Nor did he reserve his opinions, for in 1753 he annoyed Charles of Naples by his outspoken criticism of the desultory work at Pompeii and the chaotic state of the Farnese library. Indeed, it seemed that there was no subject in which he was not prepared to be interested: the constitution of the army, the design and manufacture of the porcelain at his Ludwigsburg factory, the establishment of elementary schools and the curriculum of his new university could all engage his attention, and bring into play his keen intellect and fine taste.

But because of these very qualities Charles Eugene was by nature an autocrat. His uncle the King of Prussia, that type of the enlightened despot, could build palaces and govern his country untrammelled by any laws save those of his own intelligence and culture. But Charles Eugene was the ruler, not of a state like Prussia, enriched by thirty years of stringent economy and efficient administration, but of a small scattered principality of no great wealth. Furthermore, like Charles I of England, Charles Eugene found himself confronted by well-entrenched Estates, one of the few democratic bodies in Germany which had survived the destruction of popular liberties in the Thirty Years War. In 1737, as a result of the expert exactions of Charles Alexander's minister, the Jew Süss Oppenheimer, the Estates had appealed to the Aulic Council of the Empire, and a constitution had been drawn up, guaranteed by the Courts of Prussia, Hanover and Denmark, regulating with scrupulous minuteness the relations between the Duke and the Estates. Possessed by a thirst for grandeur and pomp, Charles Eugene found himself frustrated at every turn by the dour unwillingness of his subjects to untie their purse-strings in order to provide him with new rococo extravagances. In an age of absolutism it was not difficult to make considerable in-



4. The Palace at Ludwigsburg

5. Apotheosis of Charles Eugene as founder of the Karlsschule



6. Interior of the Stuttgart opera-house

roads on the constitution, and his more outspoken opponents were summarily clapped into prison. He could raise money by hiring out his troops to France, and by having the taxes paid directly into his personal exchequer; but this was still insufficient to supply his needs. The army must be reorganised on the Prussian model, with gaudy and unpractical uniforms; another *Lustschloss* must be built; another virtuoso must be lured to Stuttgart to adorn the Court opera; the next Carnival must be even more splendid. But this mania grew on Charles Eugene only gradually. During the first two decades of his reign, under the able ministers von Hardenberg and Bilfinger the land was prosperous as never before, and readily complied with the moderate demands of a popular and brilliant young Duke.

When Charles Eugene assumed power in 1744 his *Kapelle* was of a respectable size, thirty-one instrumentalists and ten singers, under the *Ober-Kapellmeister* Brescianello, and over the next six years he assiduously increased and improved the personnel in preparation for the forthcoming opera. In December 1745 he engaged as singer Francesca Cuzzoni, who twenty years earlier had divided with Faustina the operatic empire of Europe. Now she was well past her prime, and was slipping fast down the slope that was to lead her to her wretched end, making buttons in the workhouse at Bologna. At Stuttgart she was expected to sing in the private chamber concerts of the Duke and in the services of the Ducal Chapel; but when her contract was renewed for three years in March 1747 the significant proviso was inserted that if she lost her voice the contract was void. She anticipated this by absconding in the autumn of 1748, leaving behind her a sizeable pile of debts; from Bologna she sent an impudent offer to return if her salary were doubled, but this was curtly refused by the Duke. In her place he appointed Marianne Pirker, a capable singer, who had been prominent in the opera company run by the brothers Mingotti, which was touring Germany with great success during this period. Pirker arrived with her husband, a violinist, and also with her intimate but presumably platonic friend, the *castrato* Giuseppe Jozzi. As yet, however, there was no opera, and the Duke had to content himself with the harlequinades and operettas of the Nicolini company, who were invited for the Carnival of 1746. Even for his marriage in 1748 there were no special performances, though

a French troupe was engaged, which gave Racine's *Andromaque* and some pieces by Voltaire.

Early in 1750 Charles Eugene commissioned the Ducal Director of Buildings, Retti, to convert the old Lusthaus, which had been used as a theatre under Eberhard Ludwig, into a proper and worthy opera house. The stage was enlarged and three galleries were built which, with the pit, could hold four thousand spectators, all at a cost of 35,000 gulden. This new theatre was opened on the Duchess's birthday, August 30th 1750, with *Artaserse,* by the Berlin *Kapellmeister* Carl Graun. This was not a new opera—it had been first performed in 1743—and the splendour of the occasion was further tarnished by the inadequacy of the resources, for extra instrumentalists had to be hired from Bayreuth to bring the orchestra up to strength, and the *corps de ballet* numbered only five. On the birthday of the Duke, February 11th 1751, the Court heard for the first time an opera by Jommelli, who was soon to overshadow the whole scene, and *Ezio* seems to have been a success, for it was followed in April by *Didone abbandonata.* At the end of the year Brescianello retired and was replaced by the young Ignaz Holzbauer from Vienna, who was later to win fame at Mannheim as the creator of the serious German opera. But despite productions of operas by Holzbauer and also by Hasse, the reigning favourite of Dresden, Jommelli was evidently preferred, and when the Duke set out for Italy in the spring of 1753, after the production of *Fetonte* in the preceding Carnival, he had resolved to seek out the composer, and if possible to bring him to Württemberg.

They met in Rome, where Jommelli was at this time *Maestro di Cappella* at St. Peters. But the composer was not altogether contented in this distinguished post, for he felt himself drawn less to church music than to opera; and indeed in this year, 1753, he gave proof of his inclination towards the stage by writing no less than ten operas for various cities in Italy. When Charles Eugene arrived in Rome Jommelli had already been approached by the Courts of Lisbon and Mannheim with a view to his taking over the direction of the operas there: but it is an indication of the immediate liking the two men felt for each other that these negotiations were abruptly broken off, and Jommelli decided to enter the Duke's service. The details of the contract were arranged by the Abbé Miloni, the Duke's agent in

Rome, while Charles Eugene himself went south to Naples, and in August 1753 Jommelli arrived in Stuttgart to produce *La Clemenza di Tito* for the Duchess's birthday on the 30th.

Niccolò Jommelli was at this time apparently at the height of his career. He was born in 1714, and had studied under Durante and Feo at Naples, and though he had had such a modest estimate of his own abilities that he had produced his first operas in 1737 under an assumed name, he had quickly earned a reputation for power and solidity, so that at Bologna Padre Martini hailed him as a *musicien philosophe*. In 1749 he was invited to Vienna, where he produced his second version of *Didone abbandonata*, and there he fell under the direct influence of Metastasio and Hasse, the two greatest exponents of the classical *opera seria*. When he returned to Italy it seemed that he would continue to pour out operas in the classical mould, uniting the tunefulness and grace of the Neapolitan school with the discreet academicism and conventionality of Hasse, and would finally earn a respectable place in musical history beside Perez and Terradellas. But the sixteen years he spent at Stuttgart were to see his development into an artist of much greater significance. In Württemberg he came into contact with the solid style of German instrumental music, and also with the French conception of opera, of which he learnt through Noverre. These influences he fused with his own Neapolitan style, which in its turn had been affected by the strict contrapuntal teaching of Martini. As a result he was able to sum up the old *opera seria*. He expanded its various forms to their utmost capacity, filling them with music which was as clear and dignified as that of any of his contemporaries, yet imbued with a nervous intensity and passion, which were foreign to their fluent numbers. His coloratura arias yield nothing to those of Hasse in point of brilliance, yet they are no mellifluous outpourings, relevant to any situation and hence to none, but expressions of a particular moment in the drama and the passions of that moment, sublimated and crystallised into music that satisfies at once the emotional and the intellectual demands of the hearer by its affective expressiveness coupled with formal elegance. Jommelli's frequent use of accompanied recitative has earned him the name of the "Gluck of Italy"; but this comparison is founded on a fundamental misconception, for while Gluck simplified the vocal parts and the

accompaniments, and broke down the barriers between aria and recitative, subordinating everything to the flow of the drama, Jommelli elaborated the orchestral parts and intensified the expressiveness of the vocal line all within the framework of the *opera seria,* in which the flow of the drama was subordinated to lingering moments of passion and pathos.

The decree appointing Jommelli was not signed until November 21st 1753. By it he was made *Ober-Kapellmeister,* with a promise of the sole reversion of the post when Brescianello died. He was given a house in Stuttgart and one at Ludwigsburg, the Duke's summer residence, with the handsome salary of 3,000 florins, payable half in cash and half in kind, such as allowances of wood, food, wine and stabling for his horses. These allowances were increased from time to time, and the position later became rather complicated; in 1767 his salary was set at 6,100 florins, with very few allowances, and out of this sum he had to pay the fees for the copyists and for the maintenance of the instruments. He was also allowed seven months leave every three years; but he was too prudent to make full use of this concession, though he produced some operas in Italy in 1757 and again in 1765. Jommelli was given control over the whole operatic establishment, for Charles Eugene had complete confidence in him and followed his recommendations without question, and he was responsible for the choice of the singers and players whose brilliance brought to life his own genius.

Almost immediately after his arrival we find names of European repute in the orchestra. Already in 1748 efforts had been made to lure Johann Stamitz from Mannheim to fill the post of *Concertmeister:* if these efforts had been successful, it is probable that a "Stuttgart" rather than a "Mannheim" school of symphonists would have gone down to musical history. In default of Stamitz, the post was given to Pasquale Bini, a pupil of Tartini, who was appointed in 1754. Later Bini was superseded by Antonio Lolli, an eighteenth century Paganini, who amazed the Court by his streams of octaves and tenths in the highest positions. But even Lolli was overshadowed for a time by Pietro Nardini, who was in the Ducal service from October 1762 until March 1765 as supernumerary *Concertmeister.* Nardini was one of the first to concentrate on expressive rather than acrobatic skill,

and he appears to have been the forerunner of the emotional fiddlers of the next century, for Schubart[1] describes him weeping over his violin as he played, and moving "ice-cold Counts and Court ladies" to sympathetic tears. Among the ripienists or second violins of the orchestra we find Florian Deller, who wrote a good deal of ballet music, and the principals included the Spaniard Martinez and Giuseppe Schiassi, an opera composer of some repute. The other players were rather less distinguished, for it was customary to call in members of the regimental bands to provide the wind music; but the Spanish brothers Pla and two members of the Besozzi family were at various times oboists in the Ducal service. Yet despite its individual brilliance, or perhaps because of it, the Stuttgart orchestra lacked both the discipline and the *éclat* of the famous Mannheim band, and Schubart ascribed this directly to a lack of the ensemble spirit, "for an orchestra of virtuosos is an army of kings who know no master".

Among singers, however, the spirit of rivalry was not necessarily a disadvantage, and the Duke's money was an effective lure to draw to Stuttgart the first virtuosi of Europe. The *prima donna* for most of this period was Maria Masi-Giura, whose brilliant abilities are displayed in the arias Jommelli wrote for her in *Didone* and *Fetonte;* she was supported by Monica Buonani and Anna Cesari, who later married the accompanist and *repetiteur* Seemann. But the Duke particularly favoured *castrati,* who were often required to take female roles. Of these the most famous was Giuseppe Aprile, who arrived in 1756. His virtues are best described by Schubart: "In him Art and Nature were marvellously combined. His delivery was always clean, and he could vary a cavatina or bravura aria time and time again with indescribable invention. He sang with the purity of a bell up to the E above the treble stave, and had a profound knowledge of vocal technique, as well as a warm and sympathetic personality." Besides Aprile there must be mentioned Pasquale Potenza, who was in the Ducal service for the three seasons 1764 to 1766, and also Rubinelli, who came to Stuttgart as a young man, handsome enough to take female parts, and lively enough to play in the comic opera. There was also a multitude of lesser *castrati,* who supported the routine duties of the Chapel and the opera house. Even in 1772, after the opera

[1] Schubart, *Gesammelte Schriften,* Vol. 1.

establishment had collapsed, Dr. Burney found fifteen of these creatures at Ludwigsburg, and it appears that Charles Eugene was relying on home production rather than on imports, for Burney mentions that the Court had in its service "two Bologna surgeons expert in this vocal manufacture".

Secure in their posts, well paid, admired by the whole of Germany, it might seem that the life of these singers was without a care. But the Duke was despotic and capricious by nature, and they could take warning from the disaster that befell the former *prima donna* Marianne Pirker. The married life of Charles Eugene had never been particularly happy, for his rather indiscriminately amorous disposition encountered a coldness and hauteur in his wife, which his own pride was not disposed to brook. In the autumn of 1756 the Duchess suddenly fled home to Bayreuth, and despite the threats of her uncle Frederick of Prussia, who saw his only ally in southern Germany thus lost to him, she resolutely refused to return. This open flaunting of his domestic disagreements before Europe provoked Charles Eugene to a burst of fury, and Pirker, who had actively abetted the Duchess in her escape, was shut up without trial in the castle of Hohenasperg, where she languished for eight years. During her imprisonment she became expert at making artificial flowers out of straw, and she managed to have some of these conveyed to Maria Theresa. The sentimental Empress was so touched that she struck a medal in her honour, and finally succeeded in obtaining her release in 1765.

After this one act of spite Charles Eugene settled down philosophically to the cultivation of his mistresses. In order to facilitate the supply he set up in 1758 the Opera and Theatre Ballet. This establishment was separate from the *Kapelle* and was placed at first under the direction of Michele dall'Agata, whose wife, the daughter of a Venetian gondolier, had been since 1757 *première danseuse* and a particular favourite of the Duke. Hitherto dancers had been engaged for the occasion, but now a permanent corps of six male and five female *premiers danseurs* with sixteen *figurantes* was engaged. The ballet continued to expand rapidly until by 1764 it contained no less than fifty-eight dancers, and it was a capacious receptacle for the money that Charles Eugene squandered on all sides. In 1760 the Duke, at enormous cost, persuaded Gaetano Vestris, *"le Dieu de la Danse"*,

:o spend three months of every year at Stuttgart, although he was under :ontract for each winter to the Paris Opera: with him came his son Angelo and also Le Picq, who delighted Burney with his "light fantastic toe". The *premières danseuses* were less outstanding, for they were chosen not entirely on technical merit, while the *coryphées* were notorious for their frailty: Casanova, who passed through Stuttgart in 1760, noted appreciatively that "all the *danseuses* were pretty, and all boasted of having made their gracious lord happy at least once".[1]

Charles Eugene was not content with a personnel of this brilliance to grace his opera and ballet. His interest in the productions extended to the smallest details, and during rehearsals he would wander round the theatre, advising here, ordering there, now ostentatiously admiring a newly arrived *figurante,* now insisting on accompanying a singer at the harpsichord, on which he was a capable performer. With his usual extravagance he summoned to Stuttgart the most famous *couturiers* and ransacked Paris in search of exquisite materials for the delicately fantastic costumes then considered suitable to the heroes of the operatic stage. The décor was under the general direction of the Ducal Director of Buildings, De la Guépiere, but in practice the design and execution of the scenery was left to Innocenzo Colomba, the theatre architect. Colomba was assisted by a group of obscure painters, who laboured to realise the airy perspectives of their master on the yards of linen provided. However, Charles Eugene was not content with local talent and in June 1763, to the disgust of Colomba, the famous Chevalier Servandoni was brought from Paris, where he was a director of the *Académie de Peinture* and principal designer to the Opera. Servandoni was asked to provide fourteen designs for the operas of the forthcoming season, for the enormous fee of 7,500 gulden, besides the usual travelling expenses and the provision of a coach and free board and lodging. His design for the last scene of *Demofoonte,* depicting a prison vault, was particularly admired, and threw the Court into transports of delightful horror at its Gothick gloom and frightfulness.

During the sixteen years in which he was in the service of the Württemberg Court Jommelli wrote a total of twenty-eight dramatic works, including seventeen full-length *opere serie,* eight serenatas and three comic operas: in addition he wrote a certain amount of church

[1] Casanova, trans. Machen. *Memoirs.*

music, including a Te Deum and a Requiem, which the Duke caused to be published at his own expense. Compared to his former fertility this output was small enough, but it was amply justified by the consequence and weight of every work, clearly displaying the thought and care lavished on its composition. The only restraint on Jommelli's artistic freedom was that Charles Eugene himself chose the libretto to be set for the two grand operas of the year, a choice which fell either on one of Metastasio's famous dramas[1] or on a text by the Mannheim Court poet Mattia Verazi.[2] However, Jommelli was at liberty to alter the chosen libretto, a licence of which he made considerable use. Verazi was pliable to the composer's suggestions, but the Metastasio texts Jommelli altered himself, for he had some skill as a poet, and was a member of the Arcadian Academy under the charming name of Anfione Eteocilde. When he had digested the libretto, Jommelli could set to work on the composition, and Schubart bears witness to his predominant share in the artistic success of each production. "He knew the singers, the orchestra, the audience, with its whims, even the acoustics of the theatre where his opera was to be performed, and through the closest collaboration with the machinist, the stage designer and the *maître de ballet,* he could weld them all into one complete whole, so that he wrung the heart of the most phlegmatic hearer and carried him up to heaven."[3]

His comic operas[4] are perhaps the least successful, for his rather sedate muse was not altogether at ease in the genre. The serenatas are as slight and as pleasing as they were expected to be. His masterpieces were the serious operas *Didone abbandonata* (1763), *Demofoonte* (1764), *Vologeso* (1766) and *Fetonte* (1768). These splendid works are remark-

[1] The dramas by Metastasio performed during this period were: *La Clemenza di Tito* (1753 and 1765); *Artaserse* (1756); *Ezio* and *L'Asilo d'Amore* (1758); *Catone in Utica* (1754); *Nitteti* and *Endimione* (1759); *Alessandro nell'Indie* (1760); *L'Olimpiade* and *L'Isola disabitata* (1761); *Semiramide* (1762); *Didone abbandonata* (1763); *Demofoonte* (1764, 1765 and 1769); *Il Re Pastore* (1764); *Imeneo* (1765).

[2] The Verazi texts set by Jommelli were *Pelope* (1755); *Enea nel Lazio* (1755 and 1766); *Vologeso* (1766); *Fetonte* (1768).

[3] Schubart. *Op. cit.*

[4] These were: *Il matrimonio per concorso* (1766); *Il cacciatore deluso* (1767); *La schiava liberata* (1768).

able for their elaboration, with long accompanied recitatives, arias with brilliant instrumental obbligati and extensive choral scenes. Their influence on contemporary music has never been adequately assessed. Jommelli was well known in Mannheim even before he arrived in Stuttgart, and his opera symphonies were a strong influence on the instrumental style of the Mannheim school. Jommelli re-created the *opera seria* as did Gluck the *tragédie lyrique,* and if his influence was less potent than that of Gluck, it provided the fertilising Italian element which mingled with the German to produce the great masterpieces of tragic opera in the next century.

Nor was the ballet merely a vehicle for the Duke's sexual pleasures, and its artistic achievements were second only to those of Jommelli's opera. In 1758 Dall'Agata was succeeded as *maître de ballet* by Francois Sauveterre, bred in the excellent French tradition of the dance, and in March 1760, possibly at Sauveterre's suggestion, Jean Georges Noverre was called from Paris and appointed at Stuttgart, along with his wife, with a salary of 5,000 gulden between them. Although only thirty-three years old, Noverre had already won for himself a considerable reputation as dancer and choreographer. His appointment at Stuttgart marks the opening of the most significant period of his career. In this same year, 1760, he published at Lyons his famous *Lettres sur la danse et sur les ballets,* a manifesto attacking the old French conception of ballet, with its masks, its cumbrous dresses, and its rigid insistence on classical steps founded on the "five positions". Noverre rejected both this French style and also the Italian acrobatic excesses, and in their place he advocated a much freer style of mime, that could express tragedy and passion. During the seven years of his service at Stuttgart he had his first opportunity to demonstrate his theories, in practice. He created a whole series of ballets on mythological themes, which were performed between the acts of the operas and though they usually differed in subject from the opera in which they were intercalated, he was careful to keep them relevant in mood. To emphasise their programmatic intention and to distinguish them from the simple *divertissements* which had hitherto been customary, a special libretto was provided, and Noverre himself often wrote the description of the action, giving us a valuable insight into his artistic intentions. Since Jommelli was fully occupied in writing the operas

and training the singers, the ballet music was usually delegated to one of the lesser composers. Of these the most important were the violinist Florian Deller and the horn player Johann Rudolph, and Noverre was fortunate in collaborating with two composers who were so closely in sympathy with his ideals and who could meet his musical requirements. Many of the ballets he created at Stuttgart, such as *Medée et Jason, Armida* and *Pygmalion,* achieved an international fame and were revived repeatedly in Vienna, Milan, Stuttgart, London and other cities where the ballet was especially popular. The influence of Noverre on the ballet is strictly comparable to that of Gluck on the opera. He took the first steps to repress the pointless *divertissements,* which had hitherto broken up the flow of the operatic drama, and he re-established the ballet as a dramatic form in its own right, capable of developing into the idolised and overweening art of the Twentieth Century.

The winter was the principal season for opera at Stuttgart as elsewhere, and it opened auspiciously with the Duke's name-day on November 4th, the occasion for the first big production. Then there was a lull until the Carnival, which usually began on New Year's Day. By a fortunate chance Charles Eugene's birthday fell on February 11th, and seemed almost designed by Providence as the climax of the Carnival. It was always celebrated by a new opera, performed with the utmost splendour by the whole opera and ballet. Each opera lasted some three hours or more, and was usually preceded by a *licenza* or prologue, in which the Duke's glory was suitably proclaimed. On his birthday in 1761, before the performance of *L'Olimpiade,* a large portrait of Charles Eugene was discovered on the stage: the Muses laid their attributes before it, Apollo added his lyre and Mars crowned it with laurel (for this was the period of the Seven Years War); finally, while Terpsichore led a ballet, the portrait was hoisted majestically to the summit of Parnassus, and the gods grouped themselves admiringly beneath it. During the acts of the opera the Duke wandered politely from box to box, greeting his guests, and enquiring their opinions on the new work: but as soon as the ballet started he would hurry behind the scenes to encourage the *coryphées* to fresh feats by his presence. His partiality for the dancers was sufficiently obvious to cause scandal to some, and the stricter ladies

refused to attend where the proprieties were so blatantly flouted. However, the majority of the courtiers were not so squeamish, and on the gala nights, when admission was only by the invitation of the Lord Chamberlain, the Court with the local nobility ranged in the boxes and the pit, with the Life Guards posted on each side of the stage, formed a truly brilliant spectacle. On these occasions Charles Eugene would preside from the Ducal box, but at other performances in the Carnival he would often sit in the front of the pit, in order to hear better. But while the Duke's opinion was eagerly courted, the rest of the audience was expected obsequiously to refrain from expression of their satisfaction, and the Duke was haughtily surprised when Casanova, "unfamiliar with the usages of minor German Courts", was moved to applaud an aria "rendered most exquisitely by a *castrato* whose name I have forgotten", at a performance of *Alessandro nell'Indie* in February 1760.

The flight of the Duchess in 1756 removed the last restraint on Charles Eugene, and from this time there is something almost pathological in his desperate prodigality and striving after display. In 1758 an army of painters, gilders and *stuccatori* descended on the old opera house at Stuttgart and transformed it in the most sumptuous style. But the city was the stronghold of the Estates, who were moved only to fresh complaints at this new splendour, and the city was fast becoming distasteful to the Duke for its contumacy. The ornamental lamps and railings round the theatre were frequently found smashed, and sometimes there were demonstrations as the Duke arrived in his coach, glittering with diamonds, for an opera or masquerade. In 1764 Charles Eugene resolved to abandon Stuttgart and to remove the capital to Ludwigsburg, just as forty years previously the Elector Palatine had left Heidelberg to its ruin and had created the new capital of Mannheim. The great yellow sandstone palace at Ludwigsburg had been begun as long ago as 1693, though the main structure was built between 1704 and 1730 by Frisoni. It had been Eberhard Ludwig's principal residence during the last fifteen years of his reign, when he was under the domination of his mistress the Countess de Gravenitz, but under pressure from the Estates Charles Alexander had moved his Court back to Stuttgart, and Ludwigsburg was used only as a summer retreat. For some time Charles Eugene had been

engaged on the improvement and decoration of the palace and gardens, and in 1752 he had rebuilt the pretty little theatre, which still exists, though in a sadly dilapidated condition.

But now, with the prospect of permanent residence at Ludwigsburg, suitable provision had to be made for the proper celebration of the Carnival, and in the autumn of 1764 a new opera house was begun near the palace. Five hundred workmen were immediately engaged in an effort to have the theatre ready by the Duke's birthday in February. But the work did not proceed fast enough, and so the Ducal grenadiers were turned to this menial task, while parties of cavalry scoured the countryside to press into service the able-bodied peasants they could find. The expenses rapidly exceeded the estimates, and when the Duke's own exchequer had been emptied and the various secretariats under his personal control had been squeezed to the utmost, the State Treasury and the Church Consistory were approached. These bodies naturally refused to contribute a penny to establish Ludwigsburg as the seat of autocracy in Württemberg. Accordingly, as many as possible of the workmen and contractors were left unpaid, while the rest of the expenses went to swell the total of the Duke's personal debts. Yet despite these financial difficulties and the frequent strikes of the workmen the theatre was finished in time, and was opened on the Duke's birthday with a new production of Jommelli's *Demofoonte*.

In so short a time, barely four months, no very massive structure was possible, and the Ludwigsburg theatre was built of wood, bricked over. Nevertheless, it was one of the largest theatres in Germany, being over two hundred feet long and eighty broad, and it contained, besides the auditorium and the stage, thirty reception and dressing rooms, all panelled with huge mirrors extending to the ceiling, and reflecting the light from the chandeliers of brilliant lustres. The stage was immense, opening at the back on to the lake in the gardens, and in the *Fetonte* of 1768, 250 infantry and 80 cavalry formed a background to the 100 other principal performers.

This theatre witnessed the climax of Charles Eugene's career of prodigality. Enthroned at Ludwigsburg, out of earshot of the rumblings at Stuttgart, he had nothing to do except consult his own pleasure and spend money on himself and on his Court at a reckless

pace that betokened either the coming of bankruptcy or revolution. His birthday celebrations in 1763 were extended for over a fortnight. They commenced with Jommelli's *Didone abbandonata,* a revised version of that produced at Vienna in 1749. The final ballet followed directly on the last scene, for as the flames of Dido's palace died down the sea rose and swept over it, as at the end of *Götterdämmerung,* and out of the deep, in a shell drawn by sea monsters, rose Neptune and his Nereids, those eighteenth century Rhine Maidens, all chanting the praise of Charles Eugene. Besides two more performances of *Didone,* the festivities included three concerts, two Court balls, a nocturnal hunt, a banquet at Ludwigsburg and a gala performance of Voltaire's *Zaine;* the Court plunged into Lent only after a *Carrousel* at Ludwigsburg, at which the gardens were entirely roofed in by canvas, and winter was turned to summer by a profusion of orange trees, and the soft glow of a thousand flambeaux. Then after Easter wagonloads of properties and costumes would groan up the Swabian hills, and coach after coach of singers, actors, *coryphées,* painters, machinists, tailors and *friseurs* would follow, until the woods round the hunting boxes of Graveneck and Bad Teinach echoed with roulades and cadenzas. In 1763 Charles Eugene began the construction of a new palace in a charming spot in the woods a few miles west of Stuttgart. This retreat, The Solitude, was built at the cost of over a million gulden, but in such haste that parts of it fell down before the whole was completed. A theatre was duly added, but had to be pulled down again immediately, since the Duke disliked the acoustics. A more satisfactory structure was finished in 1765 and was the scene of many serenatas and *opere buffe.* However, Charles Eugene soon became tired of The Solitude, and the plan of the palace was never completely executed.

Nor were operas and ballets of Jommelli the only diversions of the Duke. Since 1757 he had kept a company of French actors, who performed regularly once a week. In 1766 he started a short-lived *opera buffa* company, for which singers were fetched from Italy. His stables contained 800 horses, and 45 officials were attached to his hunt alone. By 1763 his Court consisted of no less than 1,800 persons, and wherever the Duke moved he was followed by a horde of majordomos, masters of ceremonies, pages, hunters, heyducks and couriers; indeed Charles Eugene seemed to prefer their company to that of his

equals, for Baron von Wimpfen records in his Memoirs[1] that when he returned to Württemberg from Spain after a year's absence in 1763, he found the Duke attended by only 10 noblemen, while he had a suite of six to seven hundred lower servants. Von Wimpfen gives a glowing picture of the thoughtless hedonism of the Stuttgart Court in its heyday. "Amid pleasures we went to sleep; amid pleasures we awoke. Two separate bands of music gave the signal to rise. We took breakfast in company, usually, if the weather permitted, in the shady woods. There we would fall to rounds and quadrilles to the sound of peasant music; but this was merely a practice for the evening ball, and the interval we spent at our toilet, at cards, at the table, at the theatre: now there would be a fishing expedition, now a hunt, now a saunter in the melancholy green woods, where our company never lacked for attendant nymphs. . . . But it was not merely the pretty girls who so enhanced the joys of this retreat. Everything helped—the excellent table that we enjoyed, the hearty appetite raised by our dances in the morning and hunts in the afternoon. Above all, the Duke was there, always happy, always good-tempered, brimming with intelligence and wit, always condescending to his courtiers. . . . He it was who directed our life, and everything was arranged by him with the finest taste. . . ."

But this façade of splendour hid an appalling administrative chaos, as the officials of the Court Exchequer struggled to provide the enormous sums Charles Eugene required. His revenues were derived from two sources, his own private funds, which in 1768 were estimated at some 700,000 gulden a year, and the allotment of public money from the State Treasury. Württemberg, with a population of some 600,000 souls, was not a rich duchy, and in the fifties the total income of the State was only about three million gulden: from this a generous allowance of 220,000 gulden in a year was made to the Duke for his own personal use. But an income of a million gulden a year was only a drop in the ocean of the Duke's expenditure: besides the cost of his Court, his theatres and his new palaces, he had also to pay the Army, which was under his personal control, and this alone swallowed half a million in a year.

[1] Von Wimpfen. *Memoirs,* Paris 1788, quoted in Vehse. *Geschichte der deutschen Höfe,* Vol. 25.

In 1767 the salaries of the members of the Duke's Opera and Ballet amounted to just under 100,000 florins, and in addition there were the travelling expenses of the foreign artists and the rich presents and "gratifications" of money which the Duke showered on them if they had given him particular pleasure. Over and above these payments to the actual personnel there were the costs of production and the theatre overheads, such as the lighting, which consumed more than a thousand candles at each performance. In the winter season of 1763-4 there were sixteen performances of opera and fifty of smaller pieces, and the production expenses of these amounted to 22,600 gulden. On this lavish scale the administration of the Ducal theatres was a long struggle against financial difficulties. The State Treasury was purposely dilatory in its payments, and in 1762 the *Maître des plaisirs* Buhlen complained that of the 27,000 gulden assigned by the Treasury not 3,000 had yet been paid over, and the theatre Treasurer declared that, if no money was forthcoming, it would be impossible even to light the theatre. Under these circumstances orderly finance was impossible, and while the Duke lavished "gratifications" on a new *coryphée,* the contractors and workmen of the theatre waited for years for the arrears on their wages. Altogether, it is calculated[1] that in its most brilliant days Charles Eugene's theatre swallowed 300,000 gulden or more in a year, equivalent to-day to some £100,000. This was indeed a scandalous sum for those days—a third of the Duke's own official income, and a tenth of the total revenues of the State.

To extort money from his subjects Charles Eugene resorted to the most devious devices, in which he was abetted by his skilful but unscrupulous minister, Montmartin. Six thousand infantry were hired out to France in return for a yearly subsidy of some 400,000 florins. The tobacco, salt and coinage monopolies were farmed out. A national lottery was instituted. The taxes were tripled, and by dint of constant nagging the Estates were induced to raise the Duke's Civil List from 220,000 gulden in 1752 to 1,620,000 ten years later. When these more or less legitimate sources had been exhausted, the Duke resorted to frankly illegitimate means. By the threat of quartering troops on them the towns were forced to pay large ransoms; offices were sold shamelessly; the national forests were felled and sold; special

[1] Krauss. *Das Theater* in *Herzog Karl Eugen ... und seiner Zeit.* 1907.

taxes were suddenly levied and their payment enforced by threat of confiscation and military execution. Charles Eugene pledged to the hilt his rather uncertain credit with the banking houses of Europe; when all else failed he could always leave his soldiers, his workmen and his artists unpaid.

At first the Estates had provided the money without demur. But as the Duke's demands increased apparently without limit, they became more and more reluctant, especially as they had no say in the disposal of their subsidies. They soon realised that the Duke could be quite unscrupulous in his dealings with them, and that he regarded the constitution of 1733 as merely an inconvenient obstacle in the path of his own autocracy. To these financial dissensions were added others of a more general political nature. The Duke as a Prince of the Empire was obliged to contribute his contingent to the Austrian forces in the Seven Years War—part of that rabble army of the Circles which Frederick the Great scattered at Rossbach and Leuthen; but the sentiment of the Württembergers firmly supported the Protestant powers, and their enthusiasm for the war was not increased by the brutal methods of conscription and by the fresh taxes which were levied to support the army. In time of peace, also, they were weighed down by this burden, for the standing army was kept at such a size that Leopold Mozart in 1763 declared that at Ludwigsburg one could not spit without landing in an officer's pocket or a soldier's cartridge-box.[1] In addition, the bourgeois of Stuttgart, deeply attached to their simple calendar of trade and pietist conventicles, were outraged at the horde of foreign and Roman Catholic artists, who intrigued and fought in their streets and eloped with their daughters, leaving behind a pile of bad debts, which the Duke would blandly disclaim. It was only when the Court removed to Ludwigsburg that they realised the economic benefits which they had reaped from the rich pleasure-seekers who flocked to the gayest Carnival in Germany.

In face of these encroachments the Estates at first sent deputations to the Duke and drew up memorials, pointing out that the crushing burden of taxation was stifling trade and could lead only to national

[1] Letter of July 11th 1763 (*Letters of Mozart and his family*. Trans. Anderson.)

bankruptcy. The Duke's answer, in 1758, was to seize the Treasury, disperse the Estates and shut up their leader, the lawyer J. J. Moser, in the fortress of Hohentwiel, where he languished for five years without a trial. For the next ten years Charles Eugene, like Charles I of England, governed without the Estates, through his own personal ministers. The Estates promptly appealed to the Imperial Diet; but Charles Eugene had adroitly secured his flank in Vienna, and while the war lasted Maria Theresa could not afford to estrange an ally who provided 20,000 of her troops. It was not until 1762, when peace was signed, that attention could be spared for the internal affairs of Württemberg. By then the Estates had gained a powerful ally, for Frederick of Prussia, determined to get his own back on his faithless pupil, took their side, as one of the guarantors of the original constitution. A memorial was drawn up, presenting to the Diet the grievances of the Estates—the Duke's reckless extravagance and his infringements of the constitution—and asking for immediate redress. As a provisional measure the Diet in 1764 appointed an Imperial commission to investigate the finances of the duchy, and it was found that the Duke's debts amounted to twelve million gulden. As a result various *dehortatoria* were sent to the Duke, including one ordering him to release Moser, and finally the Diet despatched a formal *mandatum inhibitorium, cassatorium et de non amplius gravando sed restituendo in statum pristinum legalem*. Even now the proceedings dragged on for another six years, while Charles Eugene twisted and turned in an effort to avoid judgment. In the winter of 1766 he went to Venice, taking with him his whole *Kapelle*, and remained there for several months, completely neglecting public affairs. When he returned he shut himself up in The Solitude with his mistresses, refused even to discuss the dispute, and forbade his Cabinet to speak to the foreign ambassadors. But the Estates would not be put off by these delaying tactics, and Frederick of Prussia was relentless in the pursuit; in 1766 he wrote to his minister in Stuttgart: "*Si vous rencontrez la moindre difficulté, parlez du haut ton et montrez de grosses dents.*" Charles Eugene was living too late in the century, and public opinion was against him. Even Dr. Burney, who would have appreciated the operatic splendours of Ludwigsburg, was moved to deplore "a passion for music as strong as that of the Emperor Nero . . . for that nation, of which the

half of the subjects are stage-players, fiddlers and soldiers, and the other half beggars, seems to me but ill-governed". Charles Eugene realised at last that he could not go on. In 1767 he dismissed Montmartin and began his programme of retrenchment. In 1770 he signed the *Erbvergleich,* in which he solemnly recognised the old constitution and admitted the rights of the Estates.

Every credit is due to Charles Eugene for his wholehearted reform. Once the judgment of the Diet had been passed, he made little attempt to evade the issue or to temporise, but proceeded to the dismissal of his former favourites with almost indecent thoroughness. There are various personal factors at the root of this apparent *volte-face*—his vanity, which was deeply hurt by his unpopularity in his own country, and the increasing sedateness of his riper age, which brought him to a fuller realisation of the duties as well as the pleasures of a ruler. Another sobering influence appeared in Franziska von Leutrum, a charming and cultured lady, who became acquainted with the Duke at the end of the sixties, and was formally installed as his mistress in 1771: but this position was not comparable to that of Noverre's *coryphées,* for Charles Eugene was demonstratively devoted to her, and rapidly became as homely and uxorious as the most bourgeois husband. He persuaded the Emperor to create her a Countess in 1774, and on the death of his absent Duchess in 1780 he married her, despite Papal opposition. His last days (he died in 1793) were passed in devoted retirement with her at the castle of Hohenheim. Under her influence the spendthrift Duke, arraigned before the whole Empire by his own subjects, was to earn the title of the Father of his Country, and be remembered in history less as the extravagant devotee of the theatre and rococo *Lustschlösser,* than as the founder of the Carlsschule.

His retrenchment began with a dramatic gesture, for early in 1767 Noverre and Vestris were dismissed, along with the whole troupe of French actors and over half the ballet, which had in the past swallowed such vast sums. Then in April 1768 the *prima donna* Masi-Giura, two other principal singers, three members of the *opera buffa,* twelve of the orchestra and fifteen of the ballet were all dismissed at one swoop. With these reduced forces the Duke contented himself for the year with dramatic works on a modest scale, and for his next birthday, in February 1769, he chose Jommelli's *Demofoonte,* which had been

produced twice before, in 1764 and 1765, and was thus well known to the performers. Almost immediately after the Carnival the *primo uomo* Aprile, divining that his day was over, absconded from Ludwigsburg, leaving behind him a pile of debts. At the end of March he was followed by Jommelli.

It is probable that the *Ober-Kapellmeister* had been vexed for some time by intrigues against himself, especially by the accusation of favouritism towards Italians at the expense of German musicians. Six years previously, in July 1763, Leopold Mozart had sourly ascribed his failure to procure an invitation for Wolfgang from the Duke to Jommelli's influence: "You can judge how partial Jommelli is to his country from the fact that he and some of his compatriots, who are ever swarming at his house to pay him their respects, were heard to say that it was amazing and hardly believable that a child of German birth could have such unusual genius and so much understanding and passion."[1] In addition, Jommelli must have felt that his genius and the fame which he had won in Europe by his Württemberg masterpieces would be inadequately served by the rapidly straitening circumstances of the Court. Nevertheless, his visit to Italy in the spring of 1769 was ostensibly one of his regular furloughs, and his intention to return if he was required is shown by a letter written in June, in which he asked the Duke to let him know what opera to compose for his name-day in November. But this letter had been preceded by one in which Jommelli had disputed the Duke's right to keep the scores of his operas, reminding him that at Dresden Hasse's right to his own scores had never been questioned, and complaining that pirated copies of his works were being sold in Stuttgart. To this reasonable letter Charles Eugene replied with a refusal even to let Jommelli have copies of his scores, evidently regarding them as sureties for his return. But in this he was mistaken, for Jommelli, disgusted at this suspicious treatment, wrote to the Duke in September announcing his intention not to leave Italy again, and giving as a pretext the breakdown in health of himself and his wife. He requested his dismissal, mentioning as the immediate cause of his resignation that Charles Eugene had sent the singer Rossi to Italy in order to engage other musicians, a duty pertaining to Jommelli as

[1] *Letters of Mozart and his family. Op. cit.*

Ober-Kapellmeister, and one which he could easily have discharged, being in Italy himself. However, Jommelli was not given his formal release until six months later, in March 1770, the intervening period being occupied by shabby squabbles over Jommelli's few debts in Stuttgart and the disposal of his personal belongings there and at Ludwigsburg. And so he was left at Naples, half forgotten and out of favour with his countrymen, who found his style by now too heavy and Germanic. He lived on the generous pension accorded him by King Joseph of Portugal, until his death in August 1774.

After Jommelli's departure, the twilight fell rapidly over the Württemberg Court. Charles Eugene made an effort to demonstrate that *opera seria* was possible without Jommelli by entrusting the composition of the opera selected for his birthday in February 1770, Verazi's *Calliroe,* to Antonio Sacchini, one of the leading representatives of the younger Neapolitan school, who was at that time working in Munich. This opera was duly produced, but on no very grand scale, and Sacchini, failing to obtain the post of *Kapellmeister,* since he asked too high a salary, pocketed the sum given him on a contract to write the Carnival opera for 1771, and departed. The vacant position finally went to one Boroni, an *opera buffa* composer of respectable mediocrity, whom Rossi had discovered in Venice, and who was willing to accept the modest salary of 2,500 gulden that was offered. Boroni stayed until 1778 and was succeeded for a short time by the violinist Mazzanti, and in 1782 by the cellist Poli, under whose obscure aegis the *Kapelle* subsisted for ten years. It was not until June 1793, a few months before the Duke's death, that it reverted to German control by the appointment of Johann Zumsteeg, a skilful composer of *Singspiele* who was fully alive to the artistic currents of the time and was a particular champion of Mozart.

To the Duke's former lavishness there now succeeded an almost unworthy passion for economy, shown by his constant reduction of the musical establishment, and such shabby devices as the sudden dismissal of an artist and his subsequent reinstatement at a lower salary. Later the Duke evolved a revolutionary scheme by which he could dispense with almost the whole of the *Kapelle* and rely on unpaid talent, which he could himself foster. In March 1769 a school of music and dancing was founded at Ludwigsburg, principally for the

children of members of the *Kapelle* and the Duke's other artistic establishments. In the next year he also started a Military Academy, where music and dancing again found an important place in the curriculum. These two schools were united in 1774, and as their necessary complement an *Ecole de Demoiselles* was started in 1773 near The Solitude. These were to be the reservoirs from which the Duke intended to draw his future musicians, for the pupils of the Academy were entirely at his disposal; the parents were obliged to sign an agreement that the children should not leave the Ducal service without permission—a tyrannical stipulation that was strictly observed, and drove Schiller to his famous flight from Stuttgart in 1777.

Thus the first years of the seventies were a period of transition. In the lists of 1771-2 we find a *Kapelle* of respectable size, if of no outstanding brilliance, consisting of forty-seven singers and orchestral players and a ballet of fifteen. The total cost of the establishment was some 66,000 florins, about two-thirds that of 1767, and this figure includes the subsidy to the school of music and dancing. When Burney visited Ludwigsburg in August 1772 he found there no musicians of note except Lolli, who was shortly to follow the example of Aprile and abscond from his creditors, and the *castrato* Rubinelli, who was also in his last year of service. However, the previous Carnival had been graced by the famous though elderly tenor Raaff, who sang in a sumptuous revival of Jommelli's *Fetonte*, and some other singers were also engaged on short term contracts. But these were only temporary expedients, before the pupils from the Academy became available, and the members of the *Kapelle* were required to instruct those who were shortly to supplant them. Sweeping dismissals in the autumn of 1772 and the spring of 1773 showed the impatience of the Duke to achieve his new and less costly state, for the novices, being fostered in a State institution, were expected to perform unpaid. In the summer of 1774, after a final series of dismissals, the budget of the *Kapelle* was set at the modest total of 20,000 gulden, and in the lists of 1776-7 we find only sixteen names.

The year 1775 may be regarded as the beginning of the last phase in the musical life of the Württemberg Court, for in this year Charles Eugene, lured by the promise of a regular subsidy, moved the Court from Ludwigsburg back to Stuttgart. Along with the Duke came

the Military Academy, which was shortly re-constituted as the Carlsschule, and from this time the operas, operettas and ballets were performed, except for the solo parts, entirely by the pupils of the *École de Demoiselles* and of the Carlsschule: these were all obliged to learn both singing and an instrument, and many of them divided their time between the orchestra pit and the stage. The theatre at Stuttgart, which had remained empty and decaying since the Carnival of 1764, was now renovated and redecorated, while the enormous stage at Ludwigsburg was left deserted until its demolition in 1801. The last step in the regularisation of the Stuttgart theatre was taken in 1777, when the right of free entry was severely restricted and the usual system of subscriptions and entrance tickets was instituted; children under twelve were charged half price, while the top gallery of the theatre was permanently reserved for the students of the Carlsschule. But in the late seventies the large theatre at Stuttgart was used less often, and with the strict economy characteristic of the Duke's declining years a smaller theatre was built from the materials of the disused theatre at the *Lustschloss* of Bad Teinach. As a last earnest of of the Duke's reformation, the scenery and properties of the little theatres at Ludwigsburg, Tübingen and The Solitude, which had seen the gay cavortings of the Duke's *coryphées,* were brought to Stuttgart for use there.

So the theatre declined to the level of that in any provincial German town, with a round of *opere buffe* and *Singspiele* presented by travelling companies, such as that of Schikaneder, which visited Stuttgart in 1778. The hegemony of the German forms was established in 1787, when Christian Schubart was appointed artistic director of the theatres. Schubart had previously been an organist at Stuttgart, and Burney had praised his skill at the harpsichord; but in 1773 he had been banished for his moral and financial irregularities. He then went to Mannheim, where he achieved a certain fame for his enthusiastic support of German opera in his periodical, the *Deutsches Chronik.* His partiality was given ample scope at Stuttgart, and during his reign Italian works were swamped by a flood of undistinguished *Singspiele:* however, he had the taste to produce works by Dittersdorf, Gluck and Mozart.

But this concerned only the public of Stuttgart, for by now the

Duke's interest had quite evaporated and he was living only in the past. Despite his dutiful attendance at the operettas and serenatas of Boroni and Poli, his mind was back in those glorious sixteen years when he had applauded the pirouettes of Vestris, and melted to the arias of Jommelli. Court performances became increasingly rare, and were confined mainly to the infrequent visits of foreign princes, and to the birthday of the Duchess Franziska, which he gallantly celebrated, while neglecting his own. On these occasions the Duke seized the opportunity to revive one of the old masterpieces, now, of course, performed not by Masi/Giura and Aprile, but by the almost nameless pupils of his Academies. The Duke's old favourite among Jommelli's operas, *Demofoonte,* was revived in 1778 for Franziska's birthday, and in honour of the Emperor Joseph II, who visited Württemberg in 1772, there was a production of *Didone abbandonata;* this so impressed the Emperor that he asked for a copy of the score, a request which the Duke honoured with the original manuscript. The same opera was revived in September 1782 for the Grand Duke Paul of Russia, who had married a niece of Charles Eugene. His visit provoked a last flash of the old extravagance, for the festivities cost a total of 345,000 gulden, and besides Jommelli's opera there was a performance of Sacchini's *Calliroe,* a ballet by Poli and two operettas by Zumsteeg.

The Duke's taste was no longer that of his subjects, and while he dreamed of his past glories they were engaged with the gracious frivolities of the Italian *opera buffa,* the French *opéra comique* and the German *Singspiel.* In 1783 Charles Eugene issued proposals to publish a complete edition of Jommelli's Württemberg operas from the Carlsschule press, and invited subscriptions. But none came, due partly, as the Duke himself admitted, "to the changed taste of the new composers, partly to the difficulty of the performance of the works, being suitable only for virtuosi". Only *L'Olimpiade* was published, and this was an embarrassment, so that finally the Duke was forced to ask the firm of Artaria in Mannheim to take over the disposal of the edition.[1]

[1] The failure of this edition was also due to bad planning, for only the arias and the accompanied recitatives were printed, omitting the *secco* recitatives, which are essential to an understanding of the drama. Thus it was in no sense a performing edition.

The public was not interested. Tranquil and content under the Duke's paternal rule, approving the public libraries and schools which were springing up all over Württemberg, they had forgotten the train of masterpieces which had once blazed in their country, and the train of discontent which they had aroused. But when Goethe passed through Stuttgart in 1797 he divined the memories which still lurked here and there.[1] "The brilliant days of Duke Charles, when Jommelli directed the opera, are still felt by the older people, who retain their lively love for Italian music. . . . All speak with enthusiasm of those brilliant times, when their taste was first formed, and they loathe German music and singing."

[1] Goethe. *Tagebuch von der Reise in der Schweiz.*

PART THREE

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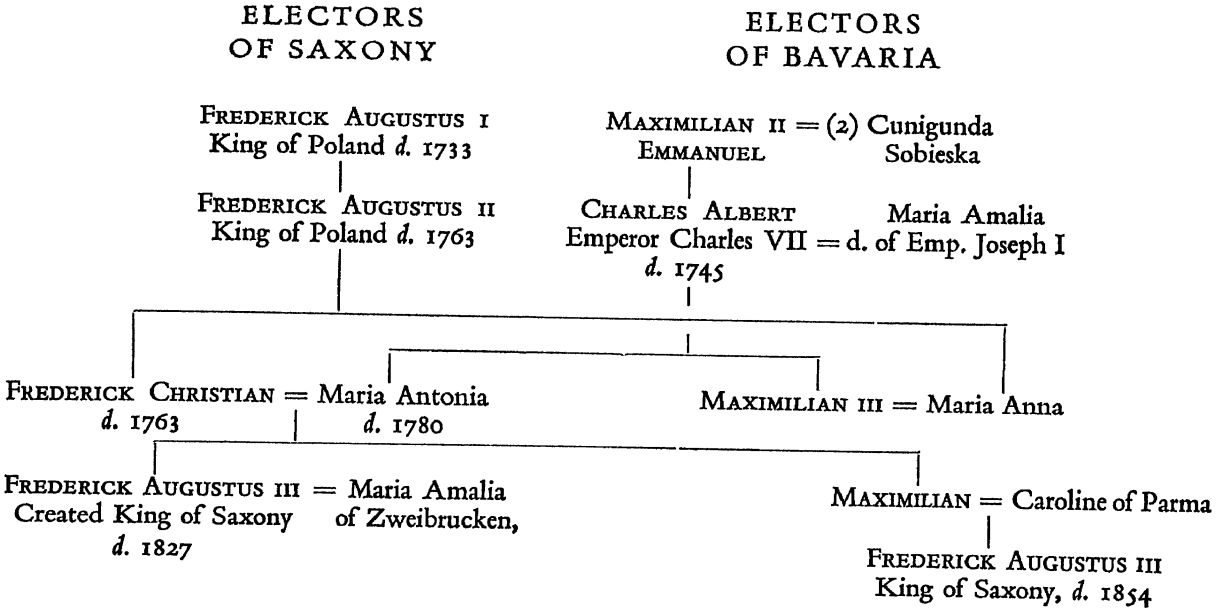
MARIA ANTONIA OF SAXONY


ELECTORS OF SAXONY
ELECTORS OF BAVARIA
FREDERICK AUGUSTUS I
King of Poland d. 1733
MAXIMILIAN II = (2) Cunigunda
EMMANUEL Sobieska
FREDERICK AUGUSTUS II
King of Poland d. 1763
CHARLES ALBERT Maria Amalia
Emperor Charles VII = d. of Emp. Joseph I
d. 1745
FREDERICK CHRISTIAN = Maria Antonia
d. 1763 d. 1780
MAXIMILIAN III = Maria Anna
FREDERICK AUGUSTUS III = Maria Amalia
Created King of Saxony of Zweibrucken,
d. 1827
MAXIMILIAN = Caroline of Parma
FREDERICK AUGUSTUS III
King of Saxony, d. 1854

Electors shewn in capitals

III

MARIA ANTONIA OF SAXONY

LET us now turn to the woman of whom Frederick the Great, so confirmed a misogynist, could write, "*Je me trouve, comme le barbier de Midas, contraint de confier mon secret aux roseaux. . . . La Princesse Électorale de Saxe mérite l'admiration de l'univers.*" Maria Antonia Walpurgis, Princess of Bavaria and Electress of Saxony, was quite used to receiving letters couched in these terms, though this did not mean that she savoured the flattery any the less, especially when it emanated from so universally admired a person as the King of Prussia. For she had acquired a prodigious reputation in the Court society of Europe for culture, virtue, piety, charity and every other amiable quality. She painted, she wrote, she composed, and when, with expressions of decent humility, she distributed presentation copies of her latest production, Frederick the Great invoked the gods, Maria Theresa shed tears, and Metastasio rolled in ecstasies of unctuous adulation.

She was born on July 29th 1724, the eldest child of Charles Albert of Bavaria and Maria Amalia of Austria, and though they would have preferred a son, they were pleased enough with the infant Maria Antonia to celebrate her birth with an opera, *Amadis de Grecia* by Pietro Torri. The Court of Munich was at this time "without Dispute the most gallant and the politest in Germany",[1] but the gallantry and polish were only superficial. The Elector Max Emmanuel had spent the eleven years 1704-1715 in exile in France, while Bavaria was occupied by the Austrians, and he returned to Munich after the Treaty of Rastatt to find his country ruined. But as if to snap his fingers at his detractors he made a point of re-establishing his Court on an even more brilliant footing than before the war. When Max Emmanuel died in

[1] Pöllnitz, *Memoirs*.

February 1726 the State debt amounted to some thirty million gulden, of which the Court Treasury alone owned more than twelve and a half million. Charles Albert inherited to the full his father's deplorable yet engaging qualities—his love of art, his dignity, his self-indulgent hedonism and *insouciant* extravagance, his general instability of character. Neither the Elector nor his wife could resist spending money for their own pleasure, and while the country was groaning near bankruptcy, artists such as Effner, Cuvilliés and Zimmermann were scattering their intricate arabesques over the gorgeous rooms of the Munich Residenz, Nymphenburg, Schleissheim and the other Court châteaux.

In music the same rather meretricious luxury prevailed. Every Carnival two or three operas were sumptuously produced, and the great names of Italy—Faustina, Bernacchi, Farinelli and Carestini—were lured to Munich by offers of enormous salaries. But Torri, the *Hofkapell-Direktor,* though showing some interesting signs of French influence in his operas, was only a composer of the second rank, and Giovanni Ferrandini, who came to the fore in the thirties, was even less inspired. The one first-rate composer in Munich was Evaristo Felice dall'Abaco, the leader of the orchestra, who wrote much fine instrumental music: but dall'Abaco never seems to have been appreciated at his true worth, for at this time he did not even hold the post of *Concertmeister*[1] and in 1737 he was passed over in favour of Ferrandini as Director of Chamber Music. So, although the musical establishment of the Court at this time was superficially large and brilliant, it could not really be said that Munich was one of the great musical centres of Germany.[2]

We do not know much about Maria Antonia's early years. She was, of course, extremely precocious, and in 1735, when she was only eleven, we find her writing to her grandmother a letter exquisitely turned in French and Latin, and in the next year she was able to bandy compliments with her brother in the purest Tuscan. In music

[1] The nominal *Concertmeister* was a decrepit Frenchman, Dardespin, who was a relic of the pre-war days: similarly, the *Kapellmeister* was the old G. A. Bernabei, and Torri did not succeed until his death in 1732.

[2] In the twenties the Bavarian *Kapelle* included seventeen singers and thirty-one instrumentalists.

she was instructed by Ferrandini who, although a very dull composer, seems to have been an efficient teacher, for Maria Antonia became a capable performer on the harpsichord and an adequate singer: in 1740 she was already able to sustain the principal role in a pastoral performed in honour of her uncle the Elector of Cologne. We can imagine her moving with youthful dignity through the gaudy Bavarian Court, sedately accepting as her due whatever flattery came her way, and probably envisaging for herself a brilliant future as Mistress of the Arts in Europe. Her pride must have experienced a severe shock in 1741 when her father Charles Albert, who had rashly attempted to despoil Maria Theresa, found himself forced ignominiously to flee from Bavaria before the advancing Austrians. A little consoled by the empty title of Emperor, for two years and a half he lingered miserably in exile with his family. At the end of 1744 he was able to return to Munich, but he was shattered in health and broken in spirit, and died shortly after his return in January 1745.

He was succeeded by his son Max Joseph, Maria Antonia's eldest brother, a modest young man of eighteen, who inherited the true Wittelsbach connoisseurship and love of art, but fortunately lacked the instability of temperament, the ambition and showiness, the political and economic short-sightedness, which had been such a blight on the family during the last few generations. Max Joseph quickly settled down to the humdrum task of retrenchment. The State debt had now risen to forty million florins, but the Elector set himself to reduce this by furthering trade and improving industries; he even demeaned himself to the level of a petty prince and hired out his troops to Austria and Holland. In his personal life Max Joseph was unassuming, and he took little pleasure in the gorgeous State functions in which his father and grandfather had so revelled. His Court was constituted on the most modest scale in a period when the neighbouring Courts of Mannheim, Dresden and Stuttgart were over-reaching themselves in extravagant splendour; early in his reign he even harboured the quixotic notion of leaving Bavaria and entering the Spanish service in order to save the expense of the Court establishments. Though he had the artistic vision to complete the rococo projects set on foot by his father—Cuvilliés's glorious Amalienburg pavilion at Nymphenburg was not completed until 1759—he himself

did not indulge in the grandiose architectural fantasies so dear to the Wittelsbach heart, and his constructive energies were devoted to the foundation of public Academies of science and the fine arts. The one exception was the building of the lovely Residenz-theatre, which replaced the old opera house, burnt down in March 1750. Max Joseph seized the opportunity to commission Cuvilliés to design a new theatre, and the work was put in hand in 1751: the theatre was finished in the summer of 1753, at the quite moderate cost of some 170,000 florins, and it was opened on October 12th, the Elector's name-day, with Ferrandini's *Catone in Utica*.

But Maria Antonia was not present to witness this. The unostentatious routine of the Munich Court under her brother must have been galling to her nascent vanity, and she was probably very relieved when in 1747 a double wedding between Saxony and Bavaria was arranged; she was to marry the Electoral Prince Frederick Christian, while Max Joseph was betrothed to the Princess Maria Anna of Saxony. Max Joseph declined to celebrate the weddings in Munich; but the Saxon Court fully made up for this. The festivities lasted for nearly a month, from June 10th until July 3rd, and were the most lavish seen in Dresden since the marriage in 1719 of the Elector Frederick Augustus. Frederick the Great, sourly watching the preparations from Berlin, wrote to his sister that Frederick Augustus "would pawn Saxony with the Jews in order to make a brave showing". The festival opera was Hasse's *La Spartana generosa,* performed on June 14th with the utmost splendour: the décor was by Giuseppe Bibiena, the ballets by the young Noverre, and the singers included the sopranos Faustina and Rosa Negri, the *castrati* Carestini and Bindi and the tenor Amorevoli, all at this time attached to the Saxon *Kapelle*. Besides this Court opera there was a less pretentious affair in a wooden theatre in the Zwinger, intended as much for the citizens of Dresden as for the Court; this was given by the Mingotti opera company, to which the young Gluck was at that time attached. On the 20th Maria Antonia made her state entry into Dresden, and a week later the Court, with the whole *Kapelle* and both opera companies, repaired to the country chateau of Pillnitz, further up the Elbe, where a splendid series of *fêtes champêtres* were staged to round off the rejoicings. Musically these consisted of the pastoral *Galatea* by

the Court composer Schurer, followed on the 29th by Gluck's *Le Nozze d'Ercole e d'Ebe*. Although Gluck was at this time barely thirty-three years old, he had already written some dozen operas, all perfectly conventional, and this new work was no radical departure; for even if posterity with the eye of faith can detect in *Le Nozze d'Ercole e d'Ebe* the germs of a new outlook on opera,[1] certainly Maria Antonia, as she sat in the cool evening watching the performance on the open air stage by the river, could never have dreamt that one day this young composer would topple into oblivion those very musical idols which she so devoutly worshipped.

Musically Dresden was at this time the most brilliant Court in Europe. In 1756, the year of its zenith, the Dresden *Kapelle* included 19 singers and an orchestra of 46 players, along with a ballet of 7 *premiers danseurs* and 22 *figurants,* and an Italian Comedy of 15 actors and singers: what with the Court composers, the theatre architects and scene painters, the pensioners and the miscellaneous officials the total personnel numbered no less than 146.[2] Of these the singers were outstanding, and the most famous of them was Faustina Bordoni, the wife of the *Kapellmeister* Hasse. Faustina was now approaching middle age, yet her voice had lost none of its beauty nor her acting its grace, and to her professional merits she added personal charms as endearing as they were exceptional among the pampered divas of the day. She won the affection of the Royal family for her sprightliness and wit, and their respect for her modesty and her unswerving fidelity to her husband: yet she never forgot her dignity as an artist, and could with impunity rebuke the Elector for chattering in his box during an opera. Faustina retired from the stage in 1751, perhaps a little vexed by the favour shown to Regina Mingotti, who, with her teacher Porpora, had stayed on in Dresden after the wedding celebrations in 1747. Mingotti and Porpora left in 1752, and the new *prima donna* was Teresa Todeschini, who had succeeded in capturing the heart and a good deal of the fortune of the powerful Minister Count Brühl. The principal *castrato* was Domenico Annibali, who kept the Court in

[1] The opera has been published by Abert in *Denkmäler Deutscher Tonkunst* XIV, 2.

[2] Fürstenau, *Zur Geschichte der Musik und des Theaters am Hofe zu Dresden.* 1861.

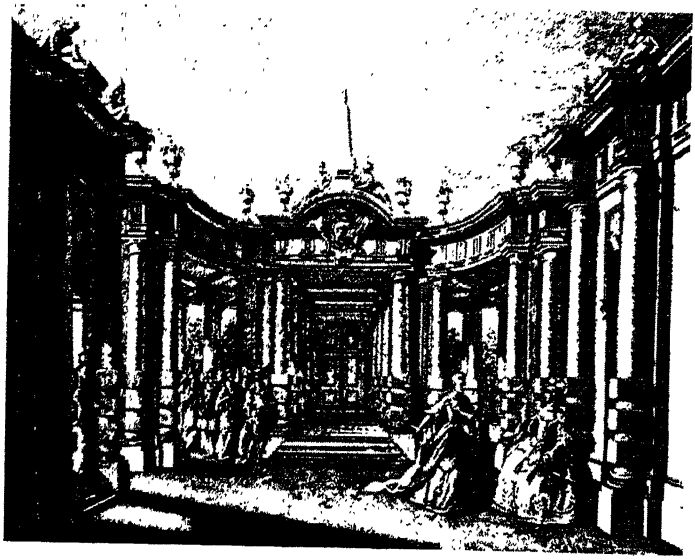
raptures with his astonishing *coloratura,* extending to F *in alt.* Of the others the most notable were Giovanni Bindi and Monticelli, who arrived in 1752: Carestini and Salimbeni paid short visits in 1747 and 1751. In an age of *castrati* Dresden also boasted a fine tenor in Angelo Amorevoli.

Such were the singers of Hasse's opera, and they were supported by an orchestra of equal splendour. Already under Augustus the Strong the Dresden band had acquired a high reputation in Germany, and this was enhanced under the leadership of the violinist Pisendel, a pupil of Vivaldi.[1] Rousseau declared that though the orchestra of the San Carlo at Naples was the largest in size, that at Dresden was the finest for its ensemble, and he was so impressed by its arrangement in the orchestra pit that he inserted a plan of this in his *Dictionnaire de Musique.*

In charge of these forces was Johann Adolph Hasse. German by birth, he had studied in Naples under Porpora and Scarlatti, and under their influence he had become completely Italian in his outlook on music. When he came to Dresden as *Kapellmeister* in 1731 his style was formed, and his operas henceforward showed no particular advance either in technique or expression. He was the precise counterpart of Metastasio in music, and during the course of his life he set every one of the poet's dramas except *Temistocle,* most of them two or three times. Like Metastasio, he was no towering genius, whose work would force itself on the attention of the world, as did Gluck's, nor was he an innovator, like Haydn, and nowhere in his works do we find the passion and intensity of Scarlatti or Jommelli, or the wide arcs of Handel's melody. Instead we find passion reduced to sentiment and intensity to sensibility, but these affections clothed in melody of such beauty and refinement that it is almost captious to ask for more. The arias, each one flawlessly lovely in itself, were strung together by long stretches of *secco* recitative, and Hasse's operas represent the furthest advance towards a purely concert-like performance in costume; it was correspondingly torpid in its total dramatic action, although both aria and recitative could individually achieve a certain dramatic effectiveness. In fact, his work is the culmination of the pure

[1] The orchestra included two Besozzis, of the family of wind players in their own way as remarkable as the Bibienas.

7. Maria Antonia Walpurgis, Princess of Bavaria and Electress of Saxony



8 & 9. Sets from Maria Antonia's opera *Talestri, Regina delle Amazone*

Metastasian *opera seria,* and the extraordinary reputation throughout Europe which he enjoyed during his lifetime was due to the recognition of this pre-eminence by his contemporaries, who rightly regarded him as the apogee of taste and discretion, always careful of his singers, incapable of displeasing.

The salaries of all the members of the *Kapelle* totalled over 100,000 thalers in 1756, and taking into account the cost of the operatic and theatrical productions, along with the incidental expenses of Court concerts and serenatas, and the usual presents or "gratifications" to the singers, we arrive at the round figure of 200,000 thalers, equivalent to about £90,000, as the amount the Elector spent on his music in a year. This was almost exactly equal to the expenditure of Charles Eugene in his heyday at Stuttgart, and both rulers were the scandal of Europe for the enormous sums they lavished on these evanescent pleasures. Nor did Frederick Augustus make any attempt to keep a check on these expenses. In 1751 Casanova was in Dresden, visiting his mother, who was a dancer with the Italian comedians under the name of La Buranella, and with his usual acuteness he described the atmosphere of luxurious extravagance at the Saxon Court. "In Dresden I had frequent opportunities of seeing the King, who was very fond of the Count de Brühl, his minister, because that favourite possessed the double secret of showing himself more extravagant even than his master, and of indulging all his whims. Never was a monarch a greater enemy to economy: he laughed heartily when he was plundered, and he spent a great deal in order to have occasion to laugh often."[1]

Casanova has caught exactly the *insouciance* of Frederick Augustus, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland. As regards his character there is little to say, for there was but little in him. When Frederick the Great captured the Elector's wardrobe in the war of 1745, he expressed surprise at the enormous number of wigs, considering how few brains there were to put inside them. Indeed, the total impression of Frederick Augustus is one of amiable vacuity. He struck all the conventional attitudes, but these lacked any inner conviction and became meaningless, slightly comic posturings. However, he had at least the wit to leave public affairs to his minister Brühl, whose government was

[1] Casanova, trans. Machen. *Memoirs.*

reasonably efficient, and the Elector was left free to devote himself to his private pleasures. For these he was well endowed. In 1711 the young Prince had been sent by his father on an eight years tour of Europe, to acquire that cultural polish which he would be forced to substitute for intellectual accomplishments. He took with him a large suite on his travels to Austria, France and Italy, and thus Saxon musicians such as Zelenka, Heinichen and Pisendel were enabled to study with foreign masters and to enlarge their musical horizons. With measured pomp the Electoral Prince moved from one Court to another, liberally disposing of the money sent to him from Dresden. He was in Venice for nearly two years, sampling all the pleasures of that luxurious city, and from here he dispatched to Dresden the brilliant opera company under Antonio Lotti which was to celebrate his own wedding in 1719 to the Archduchess Maria Josepha.[1] Frederick Augustus indeed became a connoisseur beyond the ordinary, and to the alacrity with which he purchased the Duke of Modena's collection in 1745 Dresden owes the possession of Correggio's *Notte:* Chiaveri's Hofkirche, too, though perhaps overshadowed by the Zwinger, is no mean monument to the Elector's taste in architecture. But music was his principal pleasure. He knew what he wanted, and having acquired in Hasse a composer exactly to his taste, he resolved to spare no trouble or expense in providing the most ample scope for that composer to deploy all his talents.

The other members of the Royal Family were equally enthusiastic. The Electress Maria Josepha inherited both the Hapsburg lantern jaw and the Hapsburg devotion to music, and she held private concerts almost every evening in her apartments. The Electoral Prince Frederick Christian, Maria Antonia's husband, was a cripple, with

[1] This incidentally introduced the pianoforte to northern Europe. Bartolomeo Cristofori, working for the Grand Prince of Tuscany, had constructed four *gravicembali col piano e forte* about 1711. Lotti knew of this invention, and Frederick Augustus was probably also aware of it, for he had stayed five months in Florence in 1713. Lotti's amanuensis in Dresden, Christoph Schröder, made two models of hammer-keyboards, but these were never executed. In 1723 Mattheson published an article on Cristofori which inspired the organ-builder Gottfried Silbermann to build the first German pianofortes. (Puliti, *Cenni storici della Vita del ... Granprincipe di Toscana.*)

deformed and shrivelled legs, due, it was said, to the horror of his mother at the sight of a dead deer being dragged along the ground during a *battue* at Hubertsburg. Shy and retiring, his character is rather obscured by the hard brilliance of his wife, but he seems to have shared the virtues of his father, without his posturing inanity and lack of percipience.

Maria Antonia quickly established her personal ascendency over her new family. She had no pretensions to personal beauty, indeed her features were of that plainness only achieved by German Royalty: but neither the Elector nor the Electress nor Frederick Christian could resist for a moment her intellectual attractions; they were bowled over like a set of ninepins. Without ado Maria Antonia assumed for herself the position of *doyenne* of all the arts. Poems, canzonets and cantatas began to stream from her pen, and she had an exalted audience at hand ready to greet with cries of admiration any fresh product of her genius. But we get the impression that she regarded herself rather too obviously as the ornament of the Court, that she patronised her relations a little too freely, and that when their eyes had become to some extent accustomed to her brilliance, their admiration was tinged with resentment, implicit in a certain attitude of resignation at every new portent from her. However, these family rifts, if they existed, were kept decently veiled: indeed, the Elector and Electress were too amiable and negative to resent more than mildly their conceited and priggish daughter-in-law, and too appreciative not to realise that she had real ability, and had brought to the Court just that element of personal accomplishment which it had hitherto lacked.

The first ten years of her life in Dresden were Maria Antonia's heyday. As the wife of the heir to the thrones of Saxony and Poland, she could anticipate a brilliant future, and she never tired of being assured that the Age of Gold would return with her accession. She was now able to deploy her talents on a scale impossible in the restricted conditions of Munich. She took lessons in painting from Raphael Mengs, Hasse instructed her in composition, Porpora in singing, and she even learnt the lute, by now an obsolescent instrument, from the virtuoso Sylvius Weiss. She spent money so freely in collecting pictures and scores, especially those of Hasse, which she left in her will to the Secundogenitur library, that only four months

after her marriage in October 1747, the Elector had to pay her debts, amounting to over 27,000 florins.

In the radiant atmosphere of Dresden her muse blossomed. Already in 1747, just after her marriage, Hasse had set two cantatas written by her in honour of her parents-in-law, and in the next year two more pieces by her were set by Ristori, the head of the Warsaw *Kapelle*, and by the Neapolitan composer Gennaro Manna. In 1749 she sent two cantatas, *Lavinia* and *Dido*, to Metastasio in Vienna, along with a French translation of his *Demetrio*. Metastasio wrote back to Pasquini, the Court Poet at Dresden, in terms evidently intended for other ears: "I venerate her, clip the wings of my vainglory, and hasten to speak my sentiments. . . . I should never have been able to imagine that a young Princess should be able to write, and in a foreign tongue, such excellent poetry. In the two cantatas not only the delicate arrangement of the thoughts, the connexion of ideas, the selection of words, the harmony of the verse and the tenderness of expression are admirable; but what surprises me still more is a certain artful felicity, which mere natural talents never furnish: for here a firmness of pulse appears, which is only to be acquired by long and laborious application. Now how is it possible to imagine that such painful means should ever have been put in practice by a person, who, from the eminence of her station, can have so few moments to herself?"[1] This was not all. "That a Princess placed by Providence so much above the generality of mortals should deign to suffer the production of her admirable talents to be seen by me; that with a sovereign and precious command she should put it out of all doubt from what sublime source my enviable fortune comes . . . are all superabundant temptations, sufficient to render cynic indifference ambitious, and to disturb stoic insensibility." But this flattery was not disinterested. The Elector's daughter Maria Amalia was now Queen of Naples, and Metastasio was set on regaining a fat sinecure which he had lost when Naples was captured by the Spaniards in 1734.

Metastasio's admiration was not lessened by the patent fidelity with which Maria Antonia had imitated his own style. This is especially apparent in her first major work, the oratorio *La Conversione di*

[1] Letter of January 25th, 1749, quoted and translated in Burney's *Memoirs of Metastasio*.

Sant'Agostino, which was a smooth versification of a play in the *Theatrum asceticum* of the Jesuit Francisco Neumayr. Her poem was set by Hasse and performed in the Hofkirche on Easter Saturday 1750: it became very popular at the Saxon Court, and was frequently repeated up to 1781, and at her suggestion it was also performed at Munich, Rome, Berlin and elsewhere. *La Conversione di Sant'Agostino* is indeed one of Hasse's best works, and from it a very favourable idea of his style can be obtained, for it is as gravely beautiful as any of his operas, while its static and undramatic quality is less of a drawback.[1]

Inspired by the success of this work, Maria Antonia began to try her hand at composition. After a preliminary effort in 1752 with the composition of a cantata *Giove fulminator dei Giganti,* she produced her first major work in the three-act pastoral *Il Trionfo della Fedeltà,* which was performed at Dresden in the summer of 1754, with Maria Antonia herself singing the principal part. She had previously sent the poem to Metastasio for approval; but the courtly poet made one of his few false moves, and injudiciously suggested extensive alterations. Maria Antonia did not take this well, and she wrote to Brühl of the poem: *"Metastasio l'a cruellement mutilé, il n'en a pas laissé un seul de mes airs, dont je voudrais pleurer . . ."*; further on we even find the obsequious *poeta cesareo* dismissed as *"ce coquin de Métastase"*. According to her principal biographer,[2] she composed her original poem, while Hasse set the version corrected by Metastasio, and the work published by Breitkopfs at Leipzig in 1756—one of the first to be printed with the newly invented movable type[3]—was a conflation of the two. Even if that were so, the names of Hasse and Metastasio certainly did not appear on the title page: nor, for that matter, did Maria Antonia's, for she preferred to disguise herself coyly in public under the initials E.T.P.A., which stood for Ermelinda Talea Pastorella Arcadea, the pleasantly fanciful sobriquet she adopted when she was admitted to the Arcadian Academy in 1747. The musical snobs of Europe easily penetrated this veil, and the chorus of delighted praise that arose was for Maria Antonia in person.

[1] The oratorio has been published by Schering in DDT. 20.

[2] Von Weber, *Maria Antonia Walpurgis, Churfürstin zu Sachsen.*

[3] Three hundred copies of the full score were printed at a cost of 889 thalers, or about £400.

As in poetry she followed Metastasio, even in disfavour, so in music she followed his spiritual twin Hasse. She had first met Hasse at Munich in 1746, when he and Faustina had stayed there for a few weeks on their way to Venice, and she immediately fell under the spell of his urbane italianate charm, which is evident in every bar of her music. It would indeed have been a strong musical personality that could have escaped his influence, all-pervasive at Dresden. His operas were staged in a crescendo of opulence. At the twelfth performance of *Solimano* (1753) the Court ladies were still hiring Swiss Guards to keep their places in the theatre, to watch the elephants and camels in the Turkish triumph, and to marvel at Giuseppe Bibiena's last scene of the Turkish camp by the Tigris at night, with ships sailing on the river and the gardens of Babylon hanging dizzily in the distance. For *Ezio* in 1755 the great scene-designer Servandoni was fetched specially from Paris, and in the Roman triumph, which took twenty-five minutes to pass on the stage, four hundred soldiers and more than a hundred horses from the Royal stable were deployed.

But scarcely had the procession passed when the triumph of the stage became the disaster of reality. In August 1756 the Court had removed to Hubertsburg and all preparations had been made for the autumn opera there, when suddenly war broke out. On September 9th Frederick of Prussia entered Dresden for the second time, and in a little over a month he had manoeuvred the Saxon army into an impossible position at Pirna, and had forced it to capitulate. Frederick Augustus was with the army, and immediately after the capitulation he trundled off to Warsaw with as much of the opera and ballet companies as he could muster; and there, with philosophic resignation, he settled down to listen to Hasse's operas, produced each year as if nothing untoward had happened.

Meanwhile the Queen and the rest of the Royal Family were left behind in Dresden to preserve as much as possible of Saxon autonomy under Prussian domination: but Frederick's sardonic courtesy could not disguise the fact of their virtual captivity. During the winter of 1756 Frederick stayed in the city, holding his regular evening concerts for which he brought Quantz and Benda from Berlin, and attending the church services for the sake of Hasse's music; but there were no

entertainments on any scale, for, with Prussian ardour, all the principal buildings, including the opera house, had been turned into hospitals or magazines. Frederick himself was seldom in Dresden after March 1757, when the campaigning season opened, and in November the death of the Electress Maria Josepha still further disrupted what artistic life lingered at Court. Maria Antonia continued private and more or less amateur concerts in her apartments; but without Hasse, who had left for Naples early in 1757, even these were scarcely supportable. Her release came in September 1759, when as a result of Frederick's defeat by the Russians at Kuhnersdorf Dresden was recaptured by the Austrians. After staying to hear Hasse's Te Deum sung for their liberation, Maria Antonia and her family left for Prague, and thence for her brother's Court at Munich.

Here she found things scarcely more lively. The operas performed in the Residenz-theatre were totally unworthy of their setting, and the mortmain of the *Kapellmeister* Bernasconi lay heavy over this field. Max Joseph never bothered himself much about the opera, for he was principally interested in his private concerts. He was a capable performer on the viola da gamba (Burney, who heard him in 1772, compared his playing with that of Abel, the London virtuoso) and works for this instrument formed the staple of his concerts: his chamber composers Woschitka and Croner turned out an enormous number of sonatas and concertos, for the moderate payment of 10-12 florins a dozen. Max Joseph was himself a composer, mainly of church music, but he had a modest estimate of his own abilities, and when a Stabat Mater by him was pirated and printed at Verona, he was quick to buy up the plates and all the copies he could find. In this he contrasted sharply with his sister, who was never averse to publicity. She whiled away the time at Munich with composition, and in February 1760 there was a private performance at Nymphenburg of her new opera, *Talestri, Regina delle Amazone,* for which she had written both music and libretto. But conditions at Munich were too obscure to please her, and she resolved to bide her time for a more favourable opportunity for self-display.

By 1762 the war was petering out, and in February Frederick Christian judged it safe to return to Dresden. He found Saxony ruined by the exactions of the Prussians and by the marching and

counter-marching of the rival armies. Dresden itself had been savagely bombarded by Frederick in July 1760: the whole Pirna suburb, with the Japanese Palace and the Kreuzkirche, had been destroyed, and the damage was still visible twelve years later when Burney visited the city. But the buildings of Dresden were not the only works of art destroyed. Late in 1759 Hasse had returned from Italy, and had begun to collect all the manuscripts of his works that he could find, for the Elector had offered to pay for a printing of a collected edition by Breitkopf. All these manuscripts were destroyed in the bombardment, and though copies of most of his important works exist, a great number undoubtedly perished completely. Hasse seems to have borne this blow with philosophy: Burney visited him in Vienna in 1772, and when he respectfully asked the venerable master for a list of his works, Hasse was obliged to admit that he had forgotten them. "He modestly compared himself to animals of the greatest fecundity, whose progeny were either destroyed during infancy, or abandoned to chance; and added that he, like other bad fathers, had more pleasure in producing than in preserving his offspring."[1]

Under these circumstances the celebrations of the Carnival and of the Treaty of Hubertsburg in February 1763 were limited to a few masquerades in the Zwinger theatre, though on Shrove Tuesday Maria Antonia was solemnly installed as the Tenth Muse. But in April 1763 Frederick Augustus returned from Poland, after a seven years' absence, and with almost incredible blindness to the realities of the situation he set about restoring the old luxurious routine of operas, concerts and serenatas as if there had been no war, no Prussian occupation, no bombardment. The opera house was repaired and redecorated, the gaps in the *Kapelle* were filled, and on August 3rd, the Elector's name-day, Hasse's *Siroe* was performed with pre-war pomp. Maria Antonia was quick to seize her opportunity, and on the 24th her *Talestri* was given in the palace Riding School: she herself sang the principal part, assisted by the Princesses Cunigunda and Elisabeth, while the ladies and gentlemen of the Court formed the chorus and ballet of Amazons and Scythians. A special *licenza* had been added to celebrate the return of Frederick Augustus, and the seven magnificent

[1] Burney. *Present State.*

sets were designed by Ferdinando Bibiena.[1] The news of the performance drew from Maria Theresa *"les larmes de tendresse et d'admiration pour la divine Talestris et ses incomparables talents"*. Frederick the Great was no less impressed: *"Metastasio fera des vers, Hasse de la musique; ni l'un ni l'autre ne pourront cependant présenter une pièce dont ils aient fait le poème et la mélodie en même temps. Il vous était réservé, madame, de joindre tant des talents aux grandes vertus qui vous font admirer de vos sujets. Il ne me reste que de vous admirer comme eux. . . ."*[2]

On October 5th 1763, as he was setting out for the dress rehearsal of Hasse's *Leucippo,* Frederick Augustus died of a stroke, and Maria Antonia's husband Frederick Christian became Elector of Saxony. Now was her chance to show how blessed Saxony would be with the Tenth Muse as its Electress. The Meissen porcelain factory was placed under her control and grandiose plans for an Academy of Arts, with a French and German theatre, were drawn up. But the most striking event, musically, of her short reign, was the shabby dismissal of Hasse and Faustina. On October 7th, the very day on which *Leucippo* was to have been performed, Hasse was dismissed without a pension, and in return for the empty title of Electoral *Ober-Kapellmeister* he was forced to renounce his claims to back pay, of which he was owed 18,000 thalers. Thus ignominiously did the great composer leave the Court on which he had shed such lustre. The dismissal of a man for whom Maria Antonia expressed such admiration, and whose music she so faithfully imitated, is almost inexplicable; but it was certainly due to her influence, for in this sphere she had the last word over her husband. We can only conjecture that perhaps Hasse had unwittingly offended her with ill-judged criticism, as had Metastasio thirteen years previously; or possibly Maria Antonia felt strong enough to stand musically on her own feet, after the success of *Talestri,* and resented the presence of one who would always remain her master. Her letters are silent on the point, though she continued to the end of her life in protestations of admiration and respect for Hasse and his music.

[1] The score was published by Breitkopf in 1765 with four plates signed distinctly *F. Bibiena fecit.* These have been attributed somewhat cavalierly to Carlo Bibiena; but in the Court Calendar of 1788 we find a Ferdinando Bibiena as *Theatralischer Hofmaler.* This is the only trace of a lost Bibiena.

[2] Letter of July 26th, 1763.

But she herself was shortly precipitated from her power, for on December 17th 1763, after four days illness, Frederick Christian died of smallpox, and the throne passed to her eldest son Frederick Augustus III, under the Regency of his uncle Prince Xavier. Vainly did Maria Antonia try to keep some power in her hands: the resentment of her relations, so long and so exasperatingly patronised, broke out at last, and she was curtly requested to keep her fingers out of the political and financial pie. Nor did she get any mercy from her son. For him and for his five brothers and sisters she had written various improving books—*Principes de morale chrétienne, Sentiments d'une âme pénitente sur le psaume Miserere,* and a novel *Le Laïs Philosophe,* which was a refutation of the insidious doctrines of Voltaire. But Frederick Augustus remained unimpressed, for he was a very cold and very practical young man: he doubled his mother's Civil List and politely told her to mind her own business. Having got her out of the way, he doggedly applied himself to the reconstruction of his shattered country. The Court debts of his father, amounting to more than twelve million thalers, were gradually wiped out by a sinking fund and by a judicious alliance with Prussia in the Potato War of 1778, at the Peace of Teschen he commuted his rights to the Bavarian throne through his mother for an indemnity of six million florins, which he spent in redeeming the Saxon territories cheerfully pawned by his predecessors for the sake of Lotti and Hasse.

Though Frederick Augustus counted music as his only artistic accomplishment, he was quite aware that Saxony was in no position to support the pretentious musical establishment of the pre-war days. A few months after his accession the entire personnel of the opera, theatre and ballet were dismissed; only those who could take part in the services in the Electoral Chapel were retained, while a few of the oldest members were pensioned off. At the beginning of January 1764 the cost of the *Kapelle* was fixed at just over 25,000 thalers a year, a quarter of what it had been in 1756. A return to a Court opera on the old scale was unthinkable, and in any case the Elector was temperamentally averse to a display of the passions, and was more inclined to the *opera buffa* and later to the bourgeois comedies. In 1765 Giuseppe Bustelli's *buffo* company was installed in the Zwinger theatre, and their performances were open to the public, though subsidised by the

Court: they became so popular that they were retained on the same basis for the next fourteen years. Only once was *opera seria* attempted. In February 1769 Frederick Augustus was married to Maria Amalia of Zweibrücken, and at Maria Antonia's instigation her protégé Johann Gottlieb Naumann was commissioned to compose *La Clemenza di Tito* as the festival opera. It was performed in the old opera house, with sumptuous scenery by Lorenzo Quaglio, and a brilliant cast that included Regina Mingotti and the *castrato* Pacchierotti. The opera was much applauded, for it was written in the polished Hasse style, still the touchstone at Court, but the expense of the four performances, some 50,000 thalers, showed that a return to the old days was quite impracticable.

It can easily be imagined how little Maria Antonia relished this state of affairs. Aged only forty at the time of her husband's death, she survived him for sixteen years, which she must have found rather flat after her brilliant youth, for political activity was denied her, and as a Dowager her artistic eminence and influence was considerably less than she had enjoyed as the future Electress. But she was acute enough to realise the position, and she beat a retreat in good order. Henceforth, she announced, she would live in retirement from the world, with her paintings, her books and her music, and devote her widowhood to the education of her younger children. In fact she passed her time quite pleasantly between Dresden, Pillnitz or her country estate at Kreischka, and her brother's Court at Munich or Nymphenburg. The stream of her productions suddenly dried up; she had resolved to rest on her past laurels. With a little delicate manoeuvring she was easily able to persuade her brother in Munich or her son in Dresden to stage various revivals of *Talestri* and *Il Trionfo della Fedeltà,* and she was always ready to extend her patronage to a young composer who set one of her cantatas. For the rest, her still abundant energies found their outlet in her voluminous correspondence with many of her most notable contemporaries, in which she was still able to savour the incense they offered.

It is in her correspondence with Frederick the Great that we get the clearest picture of her during this period. She had met him first in 1756, when he was in Dresden, and a month after the signing of the Treaty of Hubertsburg in March 1763 they had a further meeting for a few

days at Moritzburg. In April Maria Antonia sent him the scores of her two operas with a complimentary letter, and thus began a correspondence lasting sixteen years, in which 226 letters were exchanged, and which ended only a few months before her death.[1] On Frederick's side the correspondence opened auspiciously: "*Je suis charmé de voir une grande princesse qui cultive les arts en les protégeant. Ces arts, madame, ajoutent un nouveau lustre à vos vertus; loin de déroger à la dignité, ils la rendent plus aimable, plus humaine et plus respectable. . . .*"[2] Through the years the gentle stream of flattery flowed on in the same vein. "*Le feu de votre génie . . . est comme le flambeau de la nature, qui donne et communique la vertu dont il est empreint.*" "*. . . il vous est donné, madame, exceller en tout*"; "*. . . diva Antonia. . . .*" But as the correspondence continues it becomes increasingly obvious that Frederick did not mean a word of all this extreme adulation; he produced it simply because it was incumbent upon him, and because it formed a perfect smoke-screen behind which to retire when Maria Antonia quizzed him too closely. For in her letters we see clearly displayed her itch to meddle in politics. On all the great questions of the day, Poland, Russia, the Jesuits, the Bavarian Succession, Maria Antonia artfully trailed her coat, and every time Frederick drowned her queries in a flood of flattery or escaped into a thicket of meaningless classical allusions. Nowhere is the diabolical cleverness of the great King more apparent than in the skill with which he ran circles round this egregious woman; for his evasions were never sufficiently obvious to discourage her, and if she showed signs of pique he could lead her on once again with a little judicious flattery.

On two occasions she visited Frederick at Potsdam, for ten days in October 1769 and again almost exactly a year later. Little is known about her second visit, which had a political complexion, for she was already fussing about the Bavarian Succession: but on the first occasion she was entertained on four evenings with the famous concerts, at which she herself played the harpsichord and sang, while Frederick played the flute. On the 25th they visited the Berlin theatre to see a French play, for which Frederick himself had written the prologue, sending it to Voltaire for the final polish. They parted with

[1] The correspondence is published in Frederick's *Oeuvres*, Vol. 24, 1857.
[2] Letter of April 29th, 1763.

every conceivable mutual vow. "*Vous m'avez fait passer, Sire, les neuf journées les plus délicieuses que j'ai eues de ma vie; j'ai vu le triomphe du goût et des arts, de la magnificence et de la sagesse; tout était l'ouvrage de Frédéric . . .*" "*. . .je ne vivrai qu'avec la consolante idée de me retrouver un jour aux pieds d'une princesse que je ne cesse d'admirer, et que l'envie même ne peut que respecter. . . .*" But, as with so many of Frederick's correspondents, the conversation seemed distinctly less agreeable *tête-à-tête* than at a distance, and neither side was inclined to make the visit a yearly fixture.

Altogether, the picture of Maria Antonia at this time is not an attractive one, even if her virtues and her accomplishments seem less strident in this second period of her life than in the hard brilliance of her youthful heyday. There was one virtue in which Maria Antonia was signally lacking—humility. Although she submitted her effusions with protestations of her unworthiness, this was only to elicit even stronger protestations of her transcendent achievement. Her charity, her patronage, her correspondence even, were extended only in the prospect of a return with compound interest, and when her day was over, and the eyes of Europe had passed to other more interesting objects, she became querulous, fussy, and shrilly self-assertive. Today, when we can see that her poems are washy Metastasio, that her compositions are diluted Hasse, and that her prose writings are pseudo-philosophical small-talk or mere pious maunderings, we may wonder how so conventional a talent ever won so universal an admiration. But the Europe of the Eighteenth Century held conventionality at no discount, and Maria Antonia's pastiches were so efficiently tailored that they were really quite passable in an age when Hasse and Metastasio were the ideals to which every scribbler of music or verse aspired. She had had the two ideals almost at her elbow to help her.

But if we remain unmoved by the perfections of Maria Antonia, and if we ascribe interested motives to her charity and her patronage, we must not belittle their effects. Apart from achievements such as founding the great Secundogenitur Library and the Saxon Academy of Arts, Maria Antonia patronised a large number of artists, including the painter Mengs, the composers Porpora, Naumann, Schuster and Seydelmann, and the singers Concialini, Guadagni, Mingotti and Gertrude Schmehling, later famous as Mara. The latter made her

début in a performance of *Talestri* at Dresden in December 1767 and so impressed Maria Antonia that she took her under her wing for special instruction. In her memoirs Mara paid tribute to the enthusiasm with which Maria Antonia encouraged her singing, and to the skill and taste with which the Princess instructed her in recitative and adagio.

Maria Antonia's most distinguished pupil was J. G. Naumann. Born near Dresden in 1741, he spent several years in Italy as a young man, studying with Tartini and Padre Martini. Returning to Saxony in 1762 he managed to attract the attention of Maria Antonia who, disconsolate at the lack of *opera seria* at Dresden, decided to train the young man as the Hasse of the future, and sent him off to Italy again in August 1765 at her own expense. Here his talents won him commissions to write operas for Venice and Palermo; but his career in Italy was cut short by an abrupt summons to return to Saxony to write the festival opera for the Elector's wedding. *La Clemenza di Tito,* though a financial failure, was an artistic success, and it even won for Naumann an increase in his salary as Church Composer, a remarkable sign of favour in those stringent days. Naumann stayed in Dresden for the next few years, writing church and chamber music; but he himself confessed later in life that he felt frustrated at the lack of scope for a musician at a Court where there were no great festivals, and where the highest privilege for which a composer could hope was that of providing the oratorio for Holy Week. In 1772 he obtained leave of absence to return to Italy. On the way he visited Munich, where Maria Antonia was staying, and set two serenatas which she had written for her brother's birthday and name-day. These were so successful that Naumann was made to stay at Nymphenburg for the summer to write instrumental music for Max Joseph. In October 1774, largely through Maria Antonia's influence he was made *Kapellmeister* at Dresden, a post which he held with distinction until his death in 1801.

In this same year, 1772, Maria Antonia made a journey of some months to Italy. In her palace at Rome she was visited by Clement XIV, who was on the point of suppressing the Jesuits, and from there she went on to Naples. But she found that Italian music had sadly degenerated from the correct standards of her youth, and disconsolately she turned north to Venice. Passing through Bologna she stopped to

dine with Farinelli, who was living in luxurious retirement in his villa just outside the city. Casanova, ubiquitous as ever, was also at the dinner, and he describes how Farinelli sang an aria of his own composition at the harpsichord, whereupon Maria Antonia fell on his neck crying "Now I can die in peace!"

Indeed, it was time to think of dying, for her day was over. She was still able to sing a scene from *Talestri* to Dr. Burney in August 1772; but her voice was going, and her failing eyesight hindered her steady production of self-portraits. She lived principally in Munich now, for she had got herself into extremely bad odour at Dresden as the result of her meddling in the ticklish question of the Bavarian Succession, to which she had some claims, as Max Joseph's nearest relative. She visited the opera comparatively rarely, though in February 1773 she interested herself in a performance of Gluck's *Orfeo,* with Guadagni in the title role, and on January 1st 1775 she attended the first night of Mozart's *La Finta Giardiniera;* but though she applauded the fresh, lively little work, she did not succeed in persuading her brother to provide a post at Court for the young composer. After the death of Max Joseph in 1777 Maria Antonia had to return to Dresden, where she lived in strict retirement. As death drew nearer her memory turned ever more insistently to the music she had loved in her youth, and to the principles of taste of which she had been so fervent a disciple. She wrote nostalgically to Frederick in February 1777: "*Vous ne sauriez vous figurer, Sire, le plaisir que j'ai senti en vous voyant si zélé défenseur de l'ancienne musique, pour laquelle je romps toujours des lances. . .(Mais) j'ai affaire à des gens qui, n'étant pas nés dans le temps de la bonne musique, n'ont l'oreille accoutumée qu'au nouveau charivari, qui leur paraît beau parce-qu'il fait beaucoup de bruit. . . J'ai chanté à mon clavecin avec un plaisir nouveau le premier air que j'ai chanté dans ma vie; c'est le premier air de* Cleofide *de Hasse,* Che legge spietata, *et j'ai. . .renouvelé de cœur et d'âme mon serment de fidelité à l'ancienne musique. . . .*"

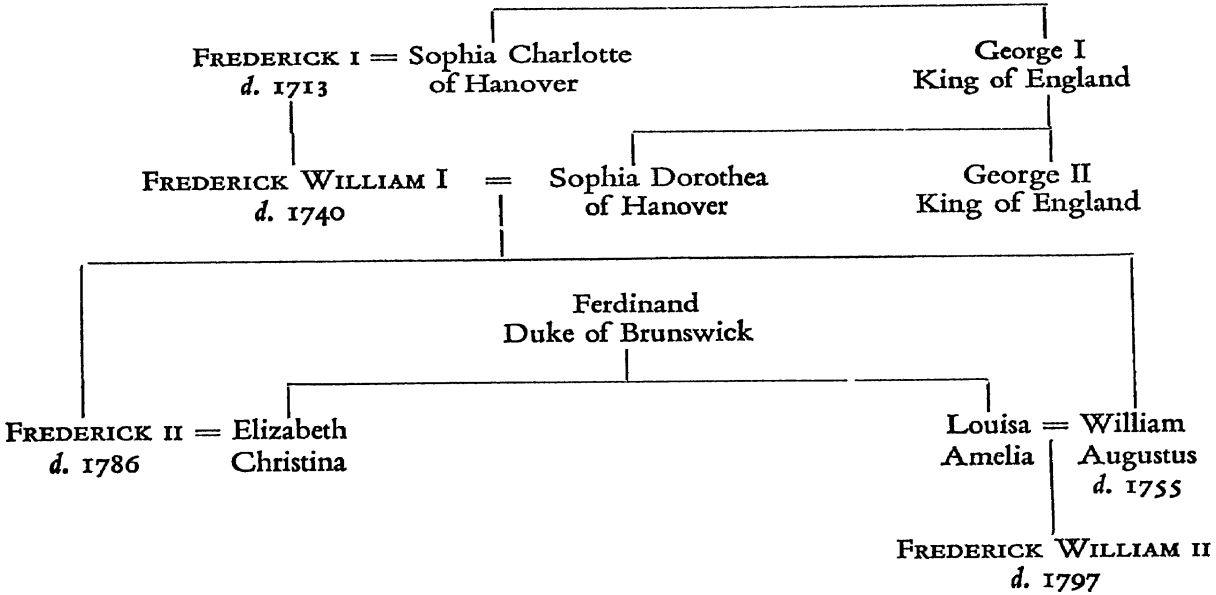
Indeed, she and Frederick were now almost the only people left who appreciated Hasse. But Maria Antonia's memory was failing, for the air *Che legge spietata* occurs, not in *Cleofide,* but in *Catone in Utica.* There was clearly nothing left for her to do in this world; and on April 23rd 1780, Maria Antonia Walpurgis passed to that sphere, where (she confidently expected) her genius would be truly appreciated.

PART FOUR

*

FREDERICK THE GREAT OF PRUSSIA

KINGS OF PRUSSIA



Kings of Prussia shewn in capitals

IV

FREDERICK THE GREAT

WHEN Frederick the Great was born, on January 24th 1712, music at the Prussian Court was on the wane. King Frederick I had only one more year to live, and the influence of the Crown Prince Frederick William, who made no secret of his dislike for musical diversions, was already felt at Court. During the lifetime of Frederick's first wife Sophia Charlotte, there had been a brief but lovely flowering of music at Berlin. Daughter of the pleasure-loving Duke Ernest Augustus of Hanover, Sophia Charlotte had received her musical education from her father's *Kapellmeister* Agostino Steffani, the most notable Italian composer of the time. She was determined to introduce Italian music to Berlin. At first she was hampered by lack of trained musicians and by financial stringency, so that she had to content herself with Court ballets on the French model. But with the appointment in the autumn of 1697 of Attilio Ariosti as her *Maestro di Musica,* she felt able to expand into grand opera. Ariosti's *La Festa del Himeneo* was the first Italian opera given in Berlin, and was performed on June 1st 1700 in a theatre specially built on the Stallplatz. More operas followed during the next four years; but the tradition never gained more than a precarious hold. Though in 1699 Frederick had officially placed the Court music at his wife's disposal, Sophia Charlotte never had her own *Kapelle* and the majority of the Italian virtuosi were borrowed temporarily from other Courts—Anspach, Hanover and Vienna—and were not attached to the Prussian *Kapelle* but were kept by the Electress at her own expense. Among these borrowed musicians was Giovanni Bononcini, Court Composer at Vienna, who came to Berlin some time in 1702 to produce his *Polifemo.* According to Telemann,[1] Sophia Charlotte herself played the continuo at this

[1] Quoted in Mattheson's *Ehrenpforte.* According to Mattheson, Bononcini was only partly responsible for the music of *Polifemo,* the rest being composed by Ariosti and others.

performance. She was certainly an excellent harpsichordist, and held concerts almost every evening in her apartments at Oranienburg or in the new palace of Charlottenburg, at which she would herself sing, or accompany Bononcini and Ariosti in Steffani's chamber duets.[1] In 1702 she even tried her hand at composition with the stiff little one-act pastoral *I Trionfi di Parnasso*.[2] As she grew older she gave way to eccentricity; she would hold concerts at midnight, and take musicians off the streets to play to her, praising or blaming them with startling unpredictability. It was probably a whim of this sort which brought the eleven-year-old Handel to play to her some time in 1696: certainly the boy succeeded in creating an impression at Court, for shortly afterwards the Elector offered to send him to Italy to be trained—an offer which was firmly rejected by his dour old father.

Sophia Charlotte died on February 2nd 1705. In an age when hardly any of the nobility were amateurs of music, and when the music of the bourgeoisie and of the Protestant churches was ponderously dull, she had brought a ray of italianate elegance and sophistication, a light in the darkness, which vanished with her. Frederick, despite his new title of King in Prussia, went rapidly to seed after her death, and in any case he had always regarded the Court music merely as an ally of his own vanity. He felt obliged to produce operas for Royal weddings in 1706 and 1708, but since the Italian musicians had all left Berlin, the operas were sung in German. A sizeable orchestra however, was preserved, in order to provide the *Tafelmusik* at the King's dinner, and in 1712 the *Kapelle* still numbered more than thirty members, of whom twenty-seven were instrumentalists, while there were only three singers. In addition, there were twelve choirboys for the Chapel Royal, twenty-four State trumpeters and two drummers. On Frederick's death in February 1713 the whole of this *Kapelle* was

[1] Her magnificent music library, which contained works by Corelli, Steffani, Scarlatti, Stradella and others, came into the possession of Frederick the Great's sister Princess Amalia, and it was left in her will to the Joachimsthal Hochschule.

[2] It is not certain that Sophia Charlotte wrote all the music for *I Trionfi di Parnasso*, but she probably had a hand in most of it. In July, 1754, Frederick wrote to his sister Wilhelmina: "I have had our grandmother's opera sung ... which sounds rather like an old wives' tale in music. There are many arias in the French musical style. ..."

summarily dismissed, and the gaily-clad trumpeters and drummers were incorporated into the regimental bands. The only musician spared, perhaps through some quirk of personal affection, was the violinist Gottfried Pepusch, the brother of the compiler of the *Beggar's Opera,* and, characteristically, he had to accept the nominal part of oboist in the Life Guards in order to preserve some *locus standi* at Court.

Because of his famous quarrel with his son, Frederick William I has become one of the most familiar, and certainly one of the most horrifying, figures in the fascinating gallery of Eighteenth Century Royalty. He was an incarnation of all the worst connotations of the word "germanic"—drunken, gluttonous, brutal, bullying, militaristic, money-grubbing, and passionately hostile to all forms of culture and elegance; yet he was formidably able, hard-working, pious and virtuous, according to his narrowly Protestant and near-Calvinist tenets. With his appalling temper and bestial ways he made life a misery for all with whom he came into contact; yet he organised the whole government and conduct of his country to a high pitch of efficiency. Sweeping away the pages, the chamberlains, the multitudinous *petits-maîtres* who had adorned the Court of his father, he created the vast bureaucracy, the devoted legion of Civil Servants which, with his other creation, the Army, has run Prussia ever since.

It is difficult to believe that this terrifying figure had had a gentle education in music and the arts at the hands of his mother Sophia Charlotte. Yet as a child he had been cherubic, before his figure broadened out and his features set into the square Bismarckian mask. In 1696 he had danced the part of Cupid in the ballet *Florens Früblingsfest* and he had also appeared in *La Festa del Himeneo;* but the memory of the muslin and tinsel of his costumes must have rankled in his pietistic soul. At first he took part in these gaieties to please his mother, but there came a day when a masquerade was planned in which she was to be the wife of a quack doctor while Frederick William was to be a mountebank. This was too much for a Protestant; when his vivid costume was produced Frederick William tore it to shreds in fury, and fled full tilt from Charlottenburg, the scene of these sinful frivolities. From this time dates his active dislike of opera and other forms of social music. Under these circumstances it is not

surprising that the Court music was suppressed at his accession, and that the trumpets and oboes of his Potsdam regiments and the horns of his *Jagdmusik* should have satisfied his simple aesthetic needs. For Frederick William was not a pure Philistine, and he had a rather vague but typical liking for Handel, whose fame had probably percolated from Hanover and Brunswick. At times he would order the military band to play through a Handel opera; but tired from hunting or from one of the maniacal bursts of rage which chequered his day, he would often fall asleep in the middle. On one occasion the bored players dared to take advantage of his nods and skipped a large portion of their music; but with his usual devilish punctiliousness, even in a subject to which he was almost indifferent, Frederick William got to hear of this and made the band play through all the omitted numbers. In addition, he had an affection for the sturdy old Protestant chorales, which he would roar out in moments of elation, in the hunting field or on military manoeuvres.

His wife Sophia Dorothea was another Hanoverian, being the daughter of our George I; but she did not take after her aunt Sophia Charlotte as regards general culture. Yet she was fond of music in a dilettantish way, and in a Court consisting of a dozen or so orderlies her evening concerts at Monbijou, though probably very indifferent, were the only oases of culture in Berlin, and were attended by the music-loving aristocracy of the capital. It is evident from her daughter Wilhelmina's Memoirs that Sophia Dorothea never had much contact or sympathy with her ten children. But if she was a neutral figure, Frederick William was a tyrant of monstrous dimensions. He humiliated them in every way, in public and in private; he beat them until they fainted, forced them to eat unpalatable food until they vomited before his eyes, and when he had exhausted himself with these physical injuries he would order them to curse their mother, the cause of their bad up-bringing. Fritz and his eldest sister Wilhelmina early formed a league of mutual defence, and from the inferno of their family life they turned for refuge and for jejune retaliation to their own superior education—for Frederick William had seen to that with his usual thoroughness. Somewhere, somehow, Frederick procured a flute and Wilhelmina a lute which they called affectionately *principe* and *principessa,* and their few moments of peace were spent with these

instruments and with some unknown tutor. These lessons had to be taken in strict secrecy, for the King would never have countenanced them, considering that military or religious exercises were the only proper occupations for his children. He had presented Fritz with a copy of Ambrosius Lobwasser's metrical psalms, set by Clement Marot, and he also allowed him a few lessons in four-part harmony from Heine, the organist of the Berlin Domkirche; so in his opinion his eldest son's musical education was adequately provided for.

Fritz's horizon widened when, in the winter of 1727-8, he accompanied his father on a State visit to Augustus the Strong at Dresden. Augustus, famous equally for his magnificence and for his licentiousness, put himself out in every possible way to entertain his visitor, to whom he was already obliged, for Augustus had bought Frederick I's collection of jewels and antiquities, paying for them with a regiment of dragoons and a promise of more of those giant grenadiers on whom Frederick William so doted. On one occasion Augustus led Frederick William and his son through the private apartments of his palace, each room more sumptuous than the last, until they reached a chamber where on a rich day-bed reclined a beautiful girl, naked as Venus. But Augustus had mistaken his man, for Frederick William beat a scandalised retreat pushing in front of him Fritz, who was eager for a glimpse of this novelty. Wilhelmina archly records that Fritz later came to a private arrangement with Augustus; but this is improbable. The trip to Dresden was more fruitful musically than sexually, and it was here that Fritz's eyes were first opened to the integral position of music in a civilised Court, and to the beauty of the Italian style, which reigned undefiled in Saxony. It is often stated that Frederick heard his first opera in Dresden, Hasse's *Cleofide;* but this is not so, for Hasse did not arrive in Dresden until July 1731. But if he saw no grand opera he certainly heard the Italian singers under the composer Giovanni Ristori, and it is probable that he saw Ristori's comic pastoral *Calandro* actually performed. Apart from vocal music, Frederick also had the opportunity of hearing the fine Dresden orchestra, which boasted several outstanding virtuosi. Yet another fresh impression was that of the Italian scenic art: he obtained a copy of the print of Giuseppe Bibiena's set for *Giove in Argo,* produced in 1719, and from the inscription on it in his handwriting, "*Approuvé*—

a 600 écus", it seems probable that Frederick later had the set constructed for the Berlin opera.

These excitements were renewed in August of the same year 1728, when Augustus returned the visit to Berlin. He came accompanied by a host of courtiers and mistresses, but he also brought with him the star virtuosi of his *Kapelle,* including the violinist Pisendel, the lutenist Weiss, and the flautists Buffardin and Quantz. Frederick William was a little embarrassed by his obvious lack of any counterparts, for the regimental oboists had to be called in to provide accompaniments; but he soon snatched Augustus away to an orgy of military manoeuvres and drunken carousals, where they were both on common if competitive ground. Fritz shammed illness to avoid these disagreeable exercises, and with his mother and Wilhelmina and the Saxon musicians he indulged in an orgy of music behind his father's back. Sophia Dorothea even offered Quantz 800 thalers a year from her own purse to enter her service; but Quantz, surveying the musical wilderness of Berlin, prudently declined. However, Frederick William was at that time undergoing one of his bouts of affection for his eldest son, and he agreed that Quantz should come twice a year from Dresden to give lessons to the Crown Prince. Even these were sometimes risky affairs, and many years later Quantz told Nicolai[1] how on one occasion he had hidden trembling in a cupboard at the approach of the King.

For Frederick William's temper, aggravated by gout and dropsy, was becoming increasingly uncertain, and his rages were maniacal in their violence. Towards his eldest son his hatred was almost pathological. In 1730, when Frederick was eighteen, the King thrashed him in public, dragged him on the ground by his hair, and finally roared at him: "If I had been treated like that by my father, I would have killed myself." It was whispered that Frederick William wished to drive the Crown Prince to suicide, to make way for the favoured second son, August Wilhelm. In this he almost succeeded. Exasperated by continuous ill-treatment, Frederick concerted a plan with the young lieutenant Katte, his intimate friend whom he had first met at one of his mother's concerts, to escape from his father while they were on a tour of the Prussian possessions on the Rhine, and to fly

[1] Nicolai, *Anekdoten von König Friedrich II von Preussen.*

to Holland, away from the merciless tyranny. The plan miscarried, and the two wretched young men were seized. At the order of the King the affair was treated as military desertion and tried by Court martial. Katte was sentenced to death, and by his father's command Frederick was forced to witness his friend's execution. Frederick himself was confined in the fortress of Custrin, forbidden all comforts, even his books and his flute. It became clear to him that in order to enjoy any liberty, apart from the question of his succession to the throne, he would have to conform. He wrote abjectly to his father, confessing at length his faults and calling loudly on God to witness his sincere repentance. At last he was allowed back to Berlin, to kiss his father's feet in public; he returned to Custrin to plunge virtuously into a welter of administrative detail. As a final step, Frederick consented to take a wife, and on June 12th 1733 he was married to Elisabeth of Brunswick.

Peace was proclaimed between father and son, and Frederick William presented Fritz with the garrison town of Ruppin and the adjoining manor of Rheinsberg. Here Frederick spent seven tranquil years, probably the happiest in his life. In his elegant little palace, rebuilt in the best French taste by his friend Knobelsdorff, Frederick was able to set up the Republic of the Arts for which he yearned, a state in which he was ostensibly the equal of the other members, yet agreeably above them. Surrounded by his Watteaus and Lancrets, and his French books—Corneille, Molière, Racine, La Fontaine and the "divine Boileau"—he could indulge to his heart's content in literary dabblings. Here he had leisure to commence his enormous correspondence, in particular with his beloved Wilhelmina, now married to the Margrave of Bayreuth. Here in 1736 began the famous correspondence with Voltaire, which soon blossomed on both sides into an aromatic shower of poems and prettily-turned compliments. Here he could prepare the new edition of the *Henriade,* and complete and publish, with decent pseudonymity, his own literary first-born, the *Anti-Machiavel.*

Even before he was properly established at Rheinsberg Frederick made haste to gather to himself a band of musicians. He had become a competent performer on his flute, which had been restored to him on his liberation from Custrin, and Quantz still came to give him lessons

and to play with him during the summer vacation of the Dresden *Kapelle*. But Quantz was firmly settled at Dresden, and would not leave his spacious surroundings there for the cramped and provincial quarters of Rheinsberg. But at his recommendation Frederick took into his service in 1732 the Bohemian violinist Franz Benda, who in the next year brought from Dresden his brother Johann, also a violinist. Gradually a modest orchestra was built up—three more violins, a viola, viola da gamba and cello, a harp, theorbo, spinet and horn, and the oboists from Frederick's own regiment at Ruppin could be brought in when required.

At first this modest ensemble played only instrumental music under the direction of Franz Benda; but their repertoire was widened by the appointment in 1735 as regular *Kapellmeister* of the young Carl Heinrich Graun, a tenor singer and opera composer of rising fame. Graun had been educated at the Kreuzschule in Dresden, where he heard the spectacular operas of Lotti and his Italian company; from thence in 1725 he had passed into the service of the Duke of Brunswick, who ran a flourishing opera, where were performed works by Handel, Caldara, Schürmann and others, both Italian and German. In 1727 Graun became *Vice-Kapellmeister* at Brunswick, and in this capacity he wrote the festival opera for the marriage of Frederick to the Princess Elisabeth, *Lo Specchio della Fedeltà,* which was performed in June 1733 at Salzdahlum, the summer residence of the Duke. In March 1735 the Duke Ludwig Rudolf died, and his successor Ferdinand Albert announced his intention of dissolving the *Kapelle*. Frederick seized the opportunity to invite Graun to become his *Kapellmeister,* and in the middle of 1735 Graun arrived at Rheinsberg. Shortly afterwards he was joined by his brother Johann Gottlieb, another violinist.

During the next five years Graun served in the fourfold role of singer, conductor of the orchestra, composer, principally of little chamber cantatas, and instructor of the Prince in the mysteries of composition. For Frederick was determined to add some musical leaves to his literary laurels. In March 1737 we find him sending to Wilhelmina, with expressions of suitable diffidence, a concerto and a solo for her husband the Margrave, who was also a flautist, and these were shortly followed by a cantata for Wilhelmina herself. However, all these early pieces have disappeared, so we cannot judge the

development of Frederick's talent. There were other foreshadowings of the future at Rheinsberg, for Frederick instituted regular concerts before dinner, at which pieces by Graun, Hasse or Telemann might be performed, but which in fact centred round Frederick's own performance of some concerto or sonata. But Rheinsberg was a republic, at any rate in name, and Frederick exercised over all its members that charm of manner and address which as a young man gained him more personal devotion than any other European monarch, and he showed as yet few signs of that despotic selfishness which later in life was to mar his relations with his servants and friends.

So the years passed agreeably by, in a babble of French conversation and in the delightful intercourse of friends—Knobelsdorff, Chasot, Jordan, and Keyserling, whom Frederick called his Caesarion. For though the Princess Elisabeth and her ladies were living there, the tone of the Republic of Rheinsberg was predominantly male; and even if Frederick could write skittishly and untruthfully to his friends about his nightly sacrifices to Venus, the feminine element never made itself felt in the smallest degree. Life was not all French literature and Italian music, and Frederick enlivened the drudgery of local administration with a young man's usual frivolities. Ever since he had resided at Rheinsberg he had lived well above his income, and had extensively pledged his future credit in order to gain immediate supplies. In the day to day accounts of the Rheinsberg Court, which were paid by the King, there was no mention of a single musician, and Frederick kept his *Kapelle* and many other artistic and literary hangers-on entirely at his own expense. Of recent years the relations between Frederick and his father had become superficially cordial. Frederick William paid two brief visits to Rheinsberg, when he was regaled with excerpts from Handel's *Alessandro* and *Siroe,* and he saw his son at Christmas and Easter, when Frederick came to Berlin. But in his private intercourse Frederick did not bother to conceal his impatience for the throne, nor did he spare coarse jests on the wretched state to which his father was reduced: the old tyrant was now so swollen with dropsy that he measured more than eight feet round the belly.

At last, on May 31st 1740 Frederick became King in Prussia and Elector of Brandenburg. Before his death Frederick William had given orders that his funeral music should be provided by the regimental

bands, with their drums, fifes and hautboys all draped in black, and that the chorale *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden* should be sung in the church. Instead, as a last indignity, he was buried to the sound of a cantata and a four part motet for choir and orchestra by Graun, composed in the pure Italian taste.

Few reigns have opened with more brilliant prospects. Eleven years previously, in 1729, Pöllnitz had written: "This young Prince is handsome, charms everyone by his Kindness and Good-nature, and loves Reading, Music, the Arts and Magnificence. His Sentiments, his Behaviour and his Actions make it probable that if he comes to the Crown, his Reign will be one of those mild and peaceable Reigns, which procure Kings that Love of their People, wherein consists their true Glory." And now that the day had come, Voltaire, entranced at the spectacle of his pupil enthroned, sent to Frederick an Ode in which he expressed the conviction that true philosophy would reign and that the Encyclopedists' heaven-on-earth would shortly come to pass. Both Pöllnitz, the sycophantic ninny, and Voltaire, the brilliant intellect, were grotesquely mistaken; for it was not the least of Frederick's achievements that he successfully combined high-flown verbal ideals, of which he induced general acceptance, with a ruthless pragmatism in the conduct of his life and of his reign. Indeed, his whole character was compounded of contradictions: he was at once idealistic and pragmatic, niggling and generous, polite and devastatingly coarse, artistic yet at times ruthlessly Philistine, now the condescending friend, now the disdainful despot. Above all, he was conceited, efficient, amoral. But if it is difficult to display his character in the round, an account of his musical life and of his dealings with his musicians and with his musical institutions will show its salient features in microcosm.

His musical taste can be summed up in his own words: *"La musique française ne vaut rien. La France pour littérature, l'Italie pour la musique."*[1] Although he professed extravagant admiration for the giants of French literature both past and present, it is probable that he never heard a note of Lully, Rameau or of any other French master. The French taste in music had never enjoyed more than a precarious

[1] Quoted in Thouret, *Die Musik am preussischen Hofe im 18 Jahrhundert.* (Hohenzollern Jahrbuch, Vol. 1.)

hold in Germany, and by 1740 the Italian style was everywhere triumphant, even over the national school. Though he never in his life set foot in Italy, at Dresden and Rheinsberg Frederick had drunk at the pure Italian fount, to which he remained unswervingly faithful. But Frederick was also an acute judge of men and of their abilities, and saw without prejudice that on the whole Germans were the best instrumentalists, Italians the best singers, French and Italians the best dancers; accordingly his *Kapelle* was constituted on these lines. This scheme became in time rather too rigid and the various nationalities were not permitted by the King to transgress outside their set functions. He remarked of Gertrude Schmehling, later famous as the singer Mara: "A German singer? I should as soon expect to receive pleasure from the neighing of my horse."[1] But this was one of the few occasions on which Frederick was obliged to retract.

When Frederick came to the throne in 1740, a young man of twenty-eight, his musical education, as distinct from his taste, was defective. He had heard, as far as is known, two operas, neither of them on a particularly grand scale. Apart from these he had heard excerpts from Handel and Telemann and a quantity of instrumental music, principally provided by his own musicians, the Grauns and the Bendas. This was scarcely a liberal education in music, and Frederick took no definite steps to improve it. One of his most curious characteristics, and one which, despite his French veneer, marks him ineluctably as a North German, is the rigidity of his taste. It was in effect formed when he came to the throne in 1740, and if it developed a little in degree during the next sixteen years, thereafter it remained fixed. His musical diet during his whole reign was astonishingly limited, and consisted almost entirely of music by composers in his own service, such as Graun and Quantz, or within his own orbit, such as Hasse. He heard scarcely a note by the great Neapolitan composers of *opera seria*, Vinci, Leo, Jommelli or Di Majo, and the few comic operas that were performed at Potsdam were nearly all anonymous, an indication of their ephemeral nature. Nor did the instrumental works and symphonies of the South German and Mannheim composers such as Wagenseil, Holzbauer or Stamitz ever penetrate to Potsdam. The new subjective style and the formal innovations of his own musician,

[1] Burney. *Present State of Music in Germany and the Netherlands.*

C. P. E. Bach, Frederick disliked; Gluck was heard and rejected.[1]

It would be wrong to ascribe this rigidity and conservatism of outlook to a defective taste or to a lack of interest in music. On the contrary; Frederick admitted his conservatism, but claimed it was due to his good taste. In the history of opera the decade 1740–50 was the great period of Hasse; since the master was firmly fixed at Dresden it was a mark of enlightenment that Frederick should have delivered over his new Opera to Hasse's close imitator, Graun. In the elevated sentiments and sober nobility of Graun's operas, and in the impersonal yet at the same time intimate qualities of his instrumental music, Frederick found his own ideals faithfully reflected. Having discovered the best in music, it was natural that Frederick should remain constant to it. Yet he did not remain passively assured of his own orthodoxy. His active enthusiasm for music is revealed in his correspondence, with his sisters Wilhelmina in Bayreuth and Amalia in Berlin, with Maria Antonia of Saxony, with his valet Fredersdorff, with d'Alembert, who had abridged and clarified Rameau's *Traité de l'Harmonie,* with Voltaire even, who was completely unmusical, but quite ready to discuss anything. In his vivid, pointed French style Frederick tells how he is training a favourite *castrato* to sing adagios, gives his opinion of a soprano or of Graun's latest opera, solicits suggestions on the structure of opera libretti and on the relative merits of arias *da capo* and cavatinas. The volume of his private correspondence is amazing in one whose political activity was so intense, and who held in his hands all the threads of the administration of his country.

The reign of Frederick the Great falls into two distinct periods, before and after the Seven Years War, and this convenient classification corresponds to a real division in the King's personal life, with which we are concerned. In the first sixteen years of his reign, from 1740 until 1756, Frederick was in the prime of his life, sanguine, vigorous, rather set in his ways and in his opinions but still flexible, and above

[1] Thouret in his *Friedrich der Grosse als Musikfreund und Musiker,* tries to make out that Frederick was really an early supporter of German music, because his *Kapellmeister* and the other composers whom he heard were German by birth. This contention does not hold water for a moment, and Thouret's whole book, published in 1898, is shot through with an addled nationalism and an extravagant acceptance of the Frederician legend.

all lively in mind. After the great war in which he so narrowly escaped destruction, he became disillusioned, cynical, tetchy and despotic in his personal relations, ossified and bigoted in his tastes and opinions. Since Frederick was so much the master of his country, this unhappy change in his personality was reflected to a greater or less extent in the routine and general spirit of the public institutions and administration, and it is particularly evident in his musical activities, both public and private. But first we are concerned with his happier period.

An Opera was the first requisite of a civilised Court and Frederick lost no time in despatching Graun to Italy to collect a company of singers, and in commissioning Knobelsdorff to draw up plans for an Opera House. These plans were presented to him at the end of October 1740, but work did not actually begin on the theatre until July 1741 because of delays in collecting the vast store of materials necessary. Meanwhile Frederick, recognising that the State Opera would not be ready for some time, determined that he at least should not be deprived of his pleasures, and ordered Knobelsdorff to build a small theatre in the Berlin Schloss. Here on December 13th 1741 was performed the first opera of the reign, Graun's *Rodelinda Regina dei Longobardi,* sung by an Italian company which had arrived in April. The opera was repeated twice within the next month, on the second occasion preceded by a new prologue to celebrate the marriage of Prince August Wilhelm.

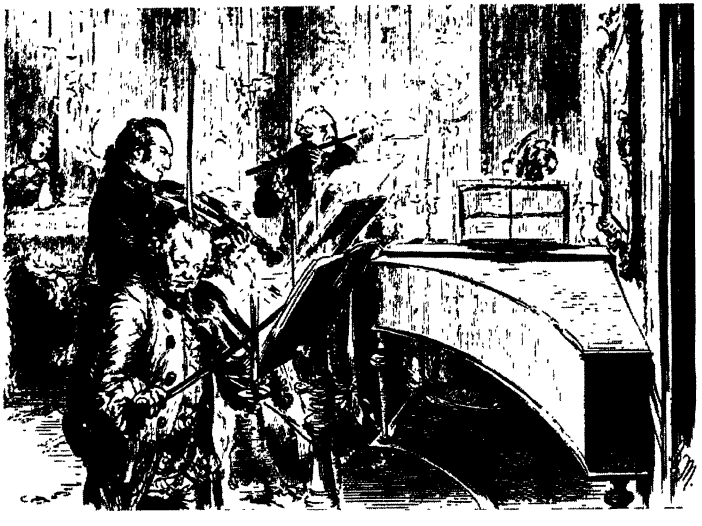
Meanwhile, the construction of the new Opera House progressed as rapidly as possible, a little hampered by the Silesian war. Such was the efficiency of Frederick's financial system that when money for the theatre began to run short, he could write from Silesia a brief note to Berlin assigning to Knobelsdorff a yearly levy of 22,750 thalers on the post office, an impost which was later continued as a general theatre fund. On December 7th 1742 the great Opera House was opened with Graun's *Cesare e Cleopatra.* Although the theatre was still unfinished on the opening night—the entrance hall was far from complete, the passages were only whitewashed and but half the gilding had been done—the brilliant audience of those fortunate enough to secure an invitation from the Lord Chamberlain must have been greatly impressed by Frederick's new creation. It was a large building, with

majestic Corinthian porticoes, 300 feet long and 100 feet broad, standing on a bastion of the old fortifications, free on all sides, so that a hundred coaches could draw up round it. There were large foyers and saloons, decorated with paintings by Pesne and Vanloo, and the staircases were so wide that sedan chairs could ascend right up to the fourth tier of boxes. The auditorium, which was modelled on that in the Dresden Opera, was lit by three huge chandeliers of wax lights, in addition to the sconces in each box: the lighting alone for the theatre cost some 2,770 thalers every evening. There were also many technical improvements in the new theatre. A canal ran under the building, from which water was pumped to tanks in the roof to provide artificial cascades and to serve as a reservoir against fire; but this did not save the theatre from destruction in 1844. The stage was large and visible from every part of the auditorium, and the acoustics were so good that it was said that a singer at the back of the stage could be heard all over the house. Knobelsdorff had indeed done his work well.

During the Carnival, which usually began some time in December and lasted for two months, operas were performed twice a week, on Mondays and Fridays: two new operas were produced each season, so that each had some eight performances, or less, if they did not please the King. The performances began at six in the evening, lasting exactly three hours, and admission was free, by private invitation from the Lord Chamberlain. These invitations were distributed regularly, first to the civic and military authorities and the remainder to those of high rank and to distinguished strangers; but despite severe threats there soon grew up a considerable black market traffic in the tickets. *Grande toilette* was obligatory at the Opera, and the scene must have been of great brilliance, with the *Gardes du Corps* in their splendid uniforms stationed round the auditorium, and the orchestra also in uniform, headed by the Graun brothers in white tie-wigs and red cloaks. The Court assembled in the Royal box, and the entry of the King was heralded by a fanfare from the trumpets and drums in the stage boxes. He took his place in the front row of the pit, where through his opera glass he could keep an eye on the orchestra and on the orchestral score, and after the Queen Mother had taken her place, to another roll of drums, the King gave the signal for the overture to begin.

10. Frederick the Great as a young man

11. Frederick the Great as an old man



12 & 13. The evening concert at the Stadtschloss, Potsdam. Above: in the King's earlier years with Quantz and Graun depicted as audience. Below: towards the end of the reign with Benda and the Crown Prince of Brunswick as violinists

The ruling spirit in this fine new opera house was Carl Heinrich Graun, who now merits closer attention. As in the case of Hasse, with whom comparison is inevitable, it is difficult to do justice to Graun now, because his whole aesthetic of opera has fallen into discredit and oblivion. To their contemporaries and to history Graun and Hasse were the twin exponents of the second-period *opera seria* of classical balance, before Jommelli and Traetta began to expand and to intensify the form, and to disrupt it from within. Graun was a little less elegant and cosmopolitan than Hasse, a shade more stodgy; yet he could at times rise to a greater dramatic power than Hasse could ever reach, largely due to certain structural innovations which, as will be explained, were instigated by Frederick himself. Since his journey to Italy in 1740-1 his style was now mature, and his operas, though they are bedevilled for us by their immensely long recitatives, present an even aspect of graceful Italian melody, never sublime, but often noble, often pathetic, always graceful and expressive. In the fifteen years of his activity in Berlin, between 1741 and 1756, Graun wrote twenty-six full-length *opere serie* for production at the Berlin Opera.[1] Frederick refused to celebrate his own birthday but—a pleasing sidelight on his rather loveless character—he always honoured that of his mother Sophia Dorothea, which fell at the end of March. From 1747 onwards it became customary to perform a full opera by Graun on this occasion in the Schloss theatre at Berlin, and this opera was then repeated, along with any necessary alterations or improvements, in the following Carnival, along with one new opera. Thus Graun had normally to provide two operas a year for production in March and December, and in addition he might be called on for a serenata or prologue for any special occasion. These stringent obligations Graun faithfully discharged.

The first company of singers which Graun had brought from Italy in 1741 proved unsatisfactory, and other virtuosi had been engaged for

[1] Graun's operas produced in this period were: *Rodelinda* (1741); *Cesare e Cleopatra* (1742); *Artaserse* (1743); *Catone in Utica, Alessandro e Poro* (1744); *Lucio Papirio, Adriano in Siria* (1745); *Demofoonte, Caio Fabricio* (1746); *Le feste galante* (1747); *Cinna, Europe galante, Ifigenia in Aulide* (1748); *Angelica e Medoro, Coriolano* (1749); *Fetonte, Mitridate* (1750); *Armida, Britannico* (1751); *Orfeo* (1752); *Silla* (1753); *Semiramide* (1754); *Montezuma, Ezio* (1755); *I Fratelli nemici, Merope* (1756).

Cesare e Cleopatra. Graun had not found it possible to write a second opera while rehearsing these singers and training the orchestra in its new duties; and so rather against his will, for the opera was already five years old, Frederick ordered for the Carnival of 1742/3 the production of Hasse's *La Clemenza di Tito*. Frederick's reluctance was only a point of pride, for he had a great admiration for Hasse, whose *Lucio Papirio* he had already heard in Dresden in January 1742. Four years later, in January 1745, during the second Silesian War, Frederick was again in Dresden, this time as a conqueror, after winning the battle of Kesselsdorf. At his orders, on the evening after his arrival Hasse's *Arminio* was performed with the magnificent Dresden company —Faustina, the tenor Amorevoli and the *castrato* Bindi, whom Frederick later tried to filch for himself. The King had never before seen a production of comparable splendour, with the virtuoso singers, the famous orchestra and the large and elaborate ballets, and he must ruefully have admitted to himself how much his own Berlin opera fell short. However, he kept this admission strictly private, contented himself with a week of concerts, and then took himself off, after procuring a score of *Arminio* and distributing handsome largesse to Hasse and the singers. *Arminio* was produced at Berlin in January 1747 and was very well received, for in view of the war against Austria the topicality of the plot was clear, with its reference to the German patriot Arminius, who abased the pride of the Roman Empire. In January 1753 there was produced the third of Hasse's operas, *Didone abbandonata*. The rehearsals had started in October, and Frederick took particular trouble over the details, since the composer himself was coming on a visit from Dresden, and Frederick would dearly have liked to persuade him to stay. But Hasse was faithful to his Saxon master: he came with the singer Monticelli, stayed for a month to hear *Silla* and *Didone*, and then returned to Dresden.

Frederick's musical contributions to Graun's operas will be mentioned later, but with his literary dilettantism it was natural that he should also concern himself with the libretti. His literary tastes were exclusively French, and Frederick made persistent and reasonably successful attempts to adapt for the purposes of *opera seria* the tragic masterpieces of Corneille, Racine and Voltaire, which he so much admired. This he effected by means of the Court poet attached to the

Opera, whose job was not to produce individual effusions, but to translate into singable Italian verse the scenario sketched by the King from the play in question—no easy feat, for the five acts of the customary French tragedy had to be compressed into three for the opera. The first opera poet, Giovanni Bottarelli, who was responsible for *Rodelinda* and *Cesare e Cleopatra*, was soon dismissed; but Leopold de Villati, appointed in January 1747, was more successful in reconciling Frederick's pernickety instructions with the requirements of Italian operatic dramaturgy. During the next five years Villati produced some very fair adaptations of works by Corneille, Racine and Quinault:[1] in addition he wrote two interesting works, *Le feste galante* (1747) and *Europe galante* (1748) which were direct translations of French *opéra-ballets*;[2] but the new form did not catch on, and there were no further works in this genre.

By this time Frederick had got tired of merely sketching a libretto: his own version of Voltaire's *Mérope* has been preserved, from which it is apparent that Frederick's part was to arrange and compress the dialogue into three acts, without altering any of the verses, and to indicate where arias should be inserted. His first attempt at individual dramaturgy was *Coriolano* (1749). It is not certain to what extent he was responsible for the plan of this libretto, but in a letter to Algarotti of September 1749 Frederick says that he is studying his singers, to put the most touching sentiments in the mouth of Astrua, *"ce qui pourra fournir un récitatif avec accompagnement"*, and that he has not written any long recitatives, but if necessary the piece can be filled out *(étendue)* by Villati: he ends by entreating Algarotti to see that Villati preserves all *"les beaux endroits"*. However, there is nothing remarkable about *Coriolano*, which was not particularly well received; and the same must be said of *Silla* (1753), which Frederick wrote in French prose and had translated into Italian verse by Tagliazecchi, Villati's successor. One might suppose that the theme of a supposedly

[1] Corneille provided *Cinna*, Racine *Ifigenia in Aulide*, *Mitridate* and *Britannico*, Quinault *Angelica e Medoro* (=*Roland*), *Fetonte* (=*Phaéton*) and *Armida*.

[2] *L'Europe galante*, by Houdart de la Motte, was composed by Campra in 1698, and long remained a favourite *opéra-ballet* on the French stage. *Les fêtes galantes*, with words by Duché and music by Desmarets was performed in the same year.

benevolent dictator would have held an intimate appeal for Frederick; but it moved him to nothing beyond conventionality.

It is quite otherwise with *Montezuma,* Frederick's last libretto, which was performed on January 6th 1755, for it was the best text that Graun ever composed. The subject, leaning rather too heavily on Voltaire's *Alzire,* is that of the conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards, and it is unusual to find a modern, almost romantic, subject of this sort in the opera of the period. But the plot was not to be merely historical: with his characteristic *philosophe* attitude Frederick was determined to make it an anti-religious tract. He wrote to Algarotti in October 1743:[1]

> *"Vous sentez bien que j'intéresserai pour Montezuma, que Cortès sera le tyran, et que par conséquent on pourra lâcher, en musique même, quelque lardon contre le barbarie de la R. Cr. (sc. religion chrétienne). Mais j'oublie que vous êtes dans un pays d'inquisition; je vous en fais mes excuses, et j'espère de vous revoir bientôt dans un pays hérétique où l'opéra même peut servir à réformer les mœurs et à détruire les superstitions."*

Accordingly Cortes is made into a religious bigot who is transported with fury at the sight of the idyllic and noble Mexican civilisation, and by deceit and bullying he succeeds in destroying it. Montezuma, on the other hand, is a philosopher-king *pur sang,* brimming with elevated sentiments and preferring to die in adherence to his code of non-resistance rather than accept a creed which seems to deny the truths of nature. This is, of course, an absurd historical solecism, though Voltaire had already set the precedent; but in admitting that, we must also admit that the plot of *Montezuma* is well constructed, with good dramatic situations and a logical sequence of thought, and the characters are well differentiated and unlike the stock figures of *opera seria.*[2] Moreover, the conflict inherent in the plot is real and powerful, and at times it seems that Frederick was swept outside himself to occasional displays of genuine feeling. Guibert, in his *Éloge de Frédéric II,*

[1] Quoted in Mayer-Reinach's introduction to the reprint of *Montezuma* in *Denkmäler Deutscher Tonkunst,* Series 1, Vol. 15. 1904.

[2] According to Schneider (*Geschichte der Oper in Berlin*), the librettist of Spontini's *Fernand Cortez* was familiar with *Montezuma.*

declares that Frederick expressed his basic "natural" philosophy in the dying words of the Mexican king:

> *"Senza tema un alma pura*
> *Rendo al sen della natura;*
> *Rendo il corpo agli elementi*
> *Onde il nascere sorti."*[1]

Montezuma is also interesting for another, more technical reason. Frederick must have realised that the *opera seria* of Graun and Hasse was in serious danger of monotony, and this monotony he ascribed not only to the lengthy *secco* recitatives, but also to the arias, which were almost invariably in three-part or *da capo* form. He decided to encourage the use in opera of the shorter two-part aria or cavatina: this decision was evidently made known during the composition of *Semiramide,* (produced in March 1754), in which the first act consists entirely of *da capo* arias, while the last act contains only cavatinas. In April 1754 he sent to his sister in Bayreuth the French version of *Montezuma: "Je prends la liberté de mettre à vos pieds un Mexicain, qui n'est pas encore tout à fait décrassé. . . .La plupart des airs sont fait pour ne point être répétés. . . ."* Wilhelmina returned the draft with complimentary expressions, and on May 4th Frederick answered: *"Je suis charmé de ce que vous soyez contente de mon opéra. Quant aux cavatines, j'en ai vues de Hasse qui sont infiniment plus jolies et qui passent rapidement. Il ne faut de reprises que lorsque les chanteurs savent varier la musique, mais il me semble que d'ailleurs il y a de l'abus à répéter quatre fois la même chose."*

These special circumstances spurred Graun to particular efforts, and *Montezuma* is probably his best opera. It seems to have been a great success, for it was repeated seven times during the remaining month of the winter season. Graun's last three operas, *Ezio, I Fratelli nemici* and *Merope,* are not particularly remarkable, though they are adaptations by Frederick and Tagliazucchi of Metastasio, Racine *(La Thébaïde)* and Voltaire respectively. So the potentialities of *Montezuma* were never realised or developed in any other opera; which makes it yet more regrettable that the Seven Years War should have broken out when it did, putting an end to all operatic activity.

[1] "Without fear I return a pure soul to the bosom of nature; I return my body to the elements from which it took its birth."

Frederick's singers rather matched the opera—they were very good, but not superb. The King must have realised this, for he seldom seemed particularly satisfied with his singers and was always trying to recruit new stars, largely through the agency of Count Cataneo, his Consul in Venice. The Opera consisted almost entirely of female singers, usually sopranos, and *castrati;* for tenors and basses were quite insignificant. During the whole of this first period there were only two women of any importance, who divided the empire between them. Benedetta Emilia Molteni first sang in *Cesare e Cleopatra* and was very well received; her aria *Sentir che mi chiama* was the only piece encored by the King during the performance. Molteni settled down at Berlin, where she married the Court composer Agricola, and she sang in every opera with great applause. However, she was succeeded as *prima donna* in 1747 by Giovanna Astrua, who was sent to Berlin from Venice by Cataneo and engaged at the handsome salary of 6,000 thalers; she made her début in *Cinna* (January 1748). She remained in Berlin as *prima donna* until 1756, when she began to lose her voice, and retired to Italy with a pension; she died two years later. Despite his contempt for the sex, Frederick recognised a fine voice when he heard one, and he paid spontaneous tribute to Astrua in a letter to Wilhelmina of June 1747, when she had just arrived: "She is indeed surprising: she executed arpeggios like a violin, and she sings anything that a flute can play with extraordinary agility and speed. Since Nature first started to manufacture wind-pipes she has never made the like. Furthermore, this woman, with all her voice and talent, is reasonable, well-behaved and sensible: it is very rare to find so many perfections together."

But it is obvious that a special place in Frederick's affections was reserved for the *castrati,* and for *Cesare e Cleopatra* there came from Italy three choice specimens, called with affectionate Italian diminutions Porporino, Paolino and Stefanino. Of these undoubtedly the best was Antonio Uberti *detto* Porporino, and Frederick became very excited about him, writing cantatas and arias for him and inviting him constantly to Potsdam for the evening concerts. Although the *castrato* was a pupil of the greatest singing teacher of the day Niccolò Porpora, Frederick took it on himself to instruct him in the execution of adagios, and wrote conceitedly to Wilhelmina that with this instruction he might well become one of the greatest singers in Europe. Frederick's

own version of an aria in Hasse's *Cleofide*,[1] which he ornamented for Porporino, is still preserved, from which it is apparent that Frederick was much more interested in the ornaments for their own sake than in preserving the musical value of the aria. However, Porporino repaid this devotion, and once touchingly declared, "My voice belongs only to God and to the King of Prussia".

There soon appeared one greater than Porporino in the shape of Felice Salimbeni, who arrived from Venice for the Carnival of 1743/4. He made his début in *Catone in Utica* (January 1744) and achieved a brilliant success, rapidly ousting Porporino in the affections of the King. Salimbeni stayed for seven feted years in Berlin and sang in fourteen operas by Graun; but the harsh Prussian climate did not agree with his delicate throat, and his voice began to go off. Frederick, piqued at the failure of *Coriolano*, for which he had sketched the libretto, rather arbitrarily chose to fix the blame on Salimbeni, who was abruptly dismissed.

His place was taken by a *castrato* of European fame, Giovanni Carestini, who had sung under Handel and Hasse. He was a contralto, and was thus a novelty in Berlin, hitherto accustomed to sopranos. His début in *Mitridate* (December 1750) was not very successful, for his voice did not blend with Astrua's shrill tones, but he won universal praise for his performance in *Orfeo* (March 1752), in which he foreshadowed another and greater contralto, Orpheus. But on the whole Carestini's stay in Berlin was not very successful, for his voice was uncertain through ill-health, and the King seems to have preferred in general the soprano voice: he finally departed in June 1754.

These singers were supported by an orchestra of thirty seven players,[2] along with two harpsichords and trumpets and drums from the Life Guards. In the middle forties there were no less than four Benda brothers in the orchestra, all of them violinists; but Johann died in 1752 and Georg, the most remarkable of the family, left

[1] The aria is *Digli ch'io son fedele:* Frederick's version in the Royal Library at Berlin, is reproduced in facsimile in Schneider, *op. cit.*

[2] In 1741/2 the orchestra consisted of 12 violins, 4 violas, 4 celli, 3 basses, 4 flutes, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, theorbo and harp. By 1754 the strength and constitution of the orchestra had not altered significantly.

Berlin in 1748 to become *Kapellmeister* at Gotha. Franz, the eldest brother, had been *Concertmeister* at Rheinsberg, but when Frederick came to the throne he was superseded by Johann Gottlieb Graun, the younger brother of the *Kapellmeister*. Despite this disappointment Benda remained in Berlin as second leader of the orchestra, and was much respected for his excellent compositions and for his violin technique; he succeeded Graun as *Concertmeister* in 1771. Apart from the two Bendas and the Grauns the members of the orchestra, all of them Germans, were not outstanding—the famous flautist Quantz did not play in the opera orchestra, being reserved for the King's private concerts. On the whole, the Berlin orchestra, though it could not compare for brilliance with that of Dresden, seems to have been an excellent band, probably better in ensemble than in individual performance, for Graun seldom wrote *obbligato* instrumental parts in his operas.

The least satisfactory section of the Royal Opera was the ballet, and during the whole of this period there was a constant succession of minor fireworks in this department; the *maîtres de ballet* lost their tempers and absconded, the *premières danseuses* eloped with the young sprigs of Berlin and the whole *corps de ballet* showed a mutinous and independent spirit, in marked contrast with the docility of the rest of the Opera. With one notable exception the ballet was almost exclusively French, and there was a constant coming and going between Paris and Berlin as the rejected dancers departed in dudgeon and the newly engaged hastened expectantly to Prussia. The trouble was that Frederick never took his ballet as seriously as he did his music or his singers, and his basic view of the *danseuses* was expressed in a letter to his Paris agent, whom he asked to procure "some *filles de joie* with sparkling eyes". Frederick did not at first think that ballets were necessary, for he boggled at the cost, and *Rodelinda* was produced without them; but his sense of propriety overcame his thriftiness and he sent to Paris for a small company, only three pairs of dancers, which arrived in August 1742. The *première danseuse* Mlle Cochois long remained a favourite in Berlin, but the *maître de ballet* Michel Poitier only survived a very short time; in August 1743 two of the dancers complained of his tyrannical behaviour and Frederick dismissed him, publishing an "anonymous" article in the *Berlinische Zeitung* giving

the reason. In 1750 there arrived the most successful of these choreographers, Denis, with his wife, who was a solo dancer of great skill: under his direction the ballet achieved a certain brilliance, though it always remained restricted in numbers.

The most famous dancer of this period was the Italian Barbarina whose amusing story illustrates well the conditions *vis-à-vis* the King under which the opera personnel at Berlin laboured. Barbara Campanini first came to the notice of Cataneo in 1743 at Venice, where she had the whole of that blasé city at her feet, and in particular a young Scotch milord, Lord James Stuart-Mackenzie, the younger brother of Lord Bute. In January 1744[1] Cataneo wrote to Frederick that Barbarina had agreed to enter the Prussian service; but for a long time she prevaricated and refused to come to definite terms, since she did not want to lose her pleasant and profitable British lover. At last Frederick lost patience and prevailed on the Venetian government to allow Cataneo to send Barbarina in a closed coach under guard to the Austrian frontier, where she was met and whisked across Germany to Berlin. The infatuated Stuart-Mackenzie trailed after her, trying unsuccessfully to bribe the guards to allow him a few minutes interview with Barbarina, who had fallen ill with "love and chagrin". In May 1744 Barbarina arrived in Berlin, and Stuart-Mackenzie wrote a letter to the King, throwing himself on the Royal clemency, and beseeching him for gracious permission to continue his love. But Frederick was not going to allow his new dancer, procured with so much trouble, to be distracted with ridiculous entanglements, and he politely asked Stuart-Mackenzie to leave: the hapless lover wrote three immense and confused epistles of farewell to Barbarina, signed *l'infortuné,* and then sadly embarked from Hamburg for England.

Barbarina made her début to the Court in May 1744 in the interlude of a comedy, and to the public in December, in the ballets of *Alessandro e Poro,* and in a trice she had conquered Berlin. The grace and wit of her dancing, her extraordinary agility and the beauty of her person produced a furore: she won particular applause in the role of Galatea, the statue which came to life, in the ballet of *Pygmalion,* first performed in 1745 and later revived in several variants. Frederick was moved by

[1] All the letters concerning Barbarina are quoted in the Appendix to Schneider, *op. cit.*

her excellence to extraordinary generosity: her original contract was for 5,000 thalers a year, but in March 1745 it was renewed for three years at 7,000 thalers, equivalent to some £3,000, with five months leave every year; but it was stipulated that she should not get married during the contract. These generous conditions, however, were perhaps prompted by the special and delicate services which Barbarina was required to render *vis-à-vis* the King.

Frederick's misogyny was only too patent, for the poor, harmless Queen Elisabeth had been packed away to Schönhausen immediately on her accession and took no part in the Court life, while Frederick's own circle was exclusively, indeed compromisingly, male. Lest this should give rise to scandalous rumour it was suggested that Frederick should take a mistress, at any rate *en titre,* and since it was usual for Royalty to amuse itself with dancers the choice fell on Barbarina. Frederick threw himself into the game with gusto, though he never ventured *jusqu'au dernier trépas:* with discreet publicity he invited her to supper *en tête-à-tête,* he applauded her at the Opera with particular emphasis, and it became known that he had had her painted by Pesne and Vanloo in allegorical and scantily-clad postures for a panel in his music-room at Potsdam and for the ceiling of the Schloss theatre there. But Barbarina wrecked this little idyll by her own bad behaviour. Her promise not to marry did not prevent her from setting up an elaborate establishment in Berlin and flirting with several eligible young men, nor did her ample salary save her from falling into debt. With the *insouciance* of her sex she refused either to pay her debts or to reduce her scale of living, and the police entered her house. The Intendant of the Opera, Baron von Swerts, wrote in agitation to the King asking what should be done, and Frederick answered peremptorily that "the creditors must either be paid or she must be arrested". Von Swerts could scarcely believe this order concerning one who had been, in the public estimation, so intimately connected with the King, and he wrote to Frederick asking if he really intended that she should be put in prison. It seems that Frederick thought better of his harsh order, and in July 1748 it was arranged that Barbarina should leave discreetly for England, where she presumably joined *l'infortuné* Stuart-Mackenzie.

The Opera was dull without Barbarina, and in the spring of 1749

she was back in Berlin; but worse was to follow, for her bright eyes and nimble legs had inspired a hopeless passion in the son of the Chancellor Cocceii, and in May the Chancellor was writing to the King beseeching him to do something to stop this infatuation. Frederick wrote sternly to the young man, and when he appeared unrepentant he was banished for a year out of harm's way to Landsberg. But in November 1751 it came to the King's ears that Barbarina was using the name "von Cocceii", and when enquiries were made she wrote to Frederick, admitting that she had married Cocceii, but imploring his clemency and protesting that all they wanted was to live quietly together. At this appalling disobedience Frederick's fury broke forth: he declared that the marriage would be annulled, that the clergyman who had performed it would be unfrocked, and that the contumacious couple had forfeited all claims to clemency or consideration. However, he realised in time that the marriage could not be undone and in the end, at the request of the Chancellor, he merely deprived the young Cocceii of his post in the Privy Council and banished him with Barbarina to Glogau in Silesia. Here they lived for a few years; but when the excitement had died down Barbarina found herself disenchanted with Cocceii and she settled on her own estate, bought the title of Countess, became Mother Superior of a convent for young gentlewomen, and died in 1799, aged 78, in the odour of respectability.

In addition to the grand opera at Berlin there were quite often performances on a smaller scale elsewhere, for there were theatres in the Potsdam Schloss and in the palace at Berlin and also less elaborate stages at Charlottenburg, Monbijou and Sans Souci. The opera performances for the Queen Dowager's birthday were usually held at Charlottenburg or Berlin, and because of the cost of heating the big Opera House it also became customary to stage several dress rehearsals of the Carnival opera at Potsdam, whither the disgruntled singers and players trekked out in lumbering coaches or carts. Frederick also liked to hold summer festivities at Potsdam, to which his family and the local petty princes were invited. The entertainments consisted principally in plays performed by the troupe of French actors or by distinguished amateurs; in September 1750 Voltaire himself took the part of Cicero in his *La Mort de César*. The *Kapelle* nominally enjoyed

a summer vacation, but in fact the musicians were frequently called on to perform small-scale pastorals and serenatas—usually pasticcios, compiled and often partly composed by Frederick himself. Early in 1748 a small troupe of Italian comedians had been engaged at Venice, and made their début in Pergolesi's famous *Serva padrona*. Their nominal function was to fill the five months' gap in the opera during the summer, but they do not seem ever to have gained much favour, for their productions were merely unambitious and largely anonymous *intermezzi*, and there was no question of a full-scale *opera buffa*.

The *Kapelle* and the whole of the Opera was under the control of an Intendant, a nobleman appointed by Frederick. From 1741 until 1756 the holder of this invidious position, which carried little financial remuneration and the virtual certainty of the King's eventual disfavour, was Baron von Swerts, and he was assisted by Angelo Cori, who was the manager of the Berlin theatre. Swerts was in a difficult position, for Frederick required to know everything that was going on and kept an extremely effective hold on the management of the Opera. The King might write impatiently on a memorandum from Swerts, *"Ich melire mich nicht von allen diesen Sachen"*, but if the Intendant dared to take him at his word he would only draw on himself the sharpest of rebukes. Correspondingly, Cataneo in Venice had no power to engage singers definitely: they were despatched to Berlin with a draft contract, and if after a recital at Potsdam they found favour with the King they were engaged and a full contract was signed. Nor did this meticulous care over detail extend only to the personnel of the Opera. All the libretti, all the designs for the scenery and costumes had to be submitted to the King and approved by him, and there are sketches for costumes with corrections in the King's own hand—*"le haut violet; sur la jupe des toussus de rubans"*. His taste was omniscient and infallible.

It was natural that Frederick should be meticulous over all the details of the Opera management, for the Opera was carried on entirely at the Royal expense, apart from the levy on the Post Office already mentioned. Unfortunately reliable figures for the Opera finances have never been published. A contemporary[1] estimated the cost of production of the first two operas *Rodelinda* and *Cesare e Cleopatra* at more than 200,000 thalers; but this figure appears grossly excessive, for

[1] Schram, *Europäisches Reise-Lexikon*, quoted in Schneider. *Op. cit.*

at Dresden production costs of a new opera were not above 25,000 thalers, and a whole Carnival cost 40,000 thalers. We must also estimate the total cost of all the Court's music at well below the Dresden figure of 200,000 thalers a year, for Frederick's opera was neither so large nor so brilliant as that at Dresden, and his close scrutiny on its finances and his cheeseparing ways were far removed from the feckless extravagance of Frederick Augustus of Saxony.

This rivalry with Dresden was indeed a constant obsession with Frederick, though it remained largely unspoken. Twice while he was King he had seen the splendid productions there, and his secret envy is shown by his attempts to filch the Dresden virtuosi, such as Hasse and the *castrato* Bindi, and to persuade them to join his own Opera. He succeeded partially with Giuseppe Bibiena, who spent the years 1751-6 between Berlin and Dresden, constructing his sumptuous décors for the operas in both capitals. But in general musicians were too aware of the brilliance of Dresden ever to choose Berlin by preference; and Frederick was beginning to acquire an unenviable reputation as a hard task-master. Occasionally Frederick admitted his envy of his neighbour. In June 1747 he wrote sourly to Wilhelmina: "At present Dresden is drunk with fêtes—this double wedding demands a double expense: but I would not barter my simple life and my solitude at Sans-Souci for the boring tumult and frivolous clinquant of their magnificent banquets."

It is time to look more closely at this "simple life" and at Frederick's solitude at Sans Souci. At the Berlin Opera Frederick appears in his public and paternal aspect, inviting his people, with regal liberality, to the sumptuous fare provided at his own expense. At Potsdam and Sans Souci he is at his ease, less obliged to keep up the mythopoeic public façade, the pose still a trifle studied, but the King now subordinated to the man, with his personal abilities and his personal taste no longer veiled in quasi-absolute garb.

Frederick first slept at Sans Souci in May 1747, and even after the building of the Neues Palais in 1763 it remained his favourite residence, along with the Potsdam Schloss. Here was gathered that famous company of wits and *littérateurs* whose prime function was gently to cosset the King's intellectual vanity, to return the lustre which he shed on them by their adroit flattery and by their discreet help in

Frederick's own effusions. The tone at Sans Souci must not be judged by the eruptions of Voltaire's famous and disastrous visits in 1743 and 1750–3. The old cronies of Rheinsberg were dead, and the society of the elegant Algarotti, of the amiable D'Argens, of Keith, Pöllnitz and Darget did not hold the perils which lurked in every word from Voltaire: they were amiable, witty and suitably obsequious, even if occasionally they chafed under their bondage. Above all, the intellectual tone at Sans Souci was lively and sceptical, and even if it was determined largely by the King, this was no more a drawback than it was in the Paris salons, which all enjoyed their reigning deities. Potsdam could never have the brilliance of Paris, but it was still young and vigorous, and had not acquired the drearily regimented air of the King's old age.

The importance of music in this pleasant society is shown by the lovely music rooms at Potsdam and Sans Souci, with their cream walls, gold arabesques, scarlet hangings, and erotic Boucher-like panels by Pesne. Here every night, except when Frederick was touring his kingdom or when there was an opera at Berlin, a concert was held before dinner, which included at least one, more often two or three concertos or sonatas performed by the King himself. Frederick described the routine to his reader Catt in 1758: "... at that hour, (four o'clock), you will come to me; we will talk until six, when my little concert begins. If passable music can amuse you, it only depends on you to hear it; everything is over at half past seven." Each morning the King chose the programme for the concert at which, besides the flute works, arias and symphonies by Hasse or Graun might be performed, or a concerto by Benda, or perhaps a singer would be put through his paces before his engagement at the Opera. This evening concert, at once formal and intimate, was perhaps the most grateful part of the day's routine for the King, and it was only cancelled for the most pressing reasons. The atmosphere was ceremonious as the musicians assembled in their uniforms and neat tie-wigs, while Quantz arranged the music on the King's tortoise-shell music stand and put out the flute for use on that evening. It was the mark of the highest favour for a stranger to be allowed to attend these arcana, a matter for solemn presentations, for avowals of taste, for protestations of the deepest respect for the King. But the regular courtiers of Sans Souci

were expected to be there, in their formal dress ready for dinner, and Voltaire, who candidly confessed that he had "never perceived the virtue of double-crotchets", yet managed to squeeze a facile tear as the King completed some adagio of his own composition.

We have examined Frederick's general musical taste: it is now time to consider his practical abilities in music. He had had a good grounding in musical theory. His earliest teacher had been the organist of the Berlin Domkirche, Heine, a narrow musician of the old school, who made the young Fritz set four-part chorales, and who discoursed at length about the ecclesiastical modes.[1] Later Graun instructed him in more up-to-date harmony and composition, and managed to inculcate into Frederick much of the easy and unobtrusive counterpoint which enlivens his essentially melodic style. Therefore it is safe to rebut the usual accusation against this royal amateur, that he merely sketched the melody of a piece, sometimes with a bass, and then left it to Graun or Quantz to fill in the inner parts. Frederick admitted that this was the case with his few vocal compositions; but in his flute works it seems that he was responsible for the whole score. Nicolai,[2] who was writing after Frederick's death and who gained his information from Quantz, is quite definite about his harmonic abilities, and this conclusion is accepted by Spitta:[3] in any case, it is unlikely that a man of Frederick's intelligence, who was not afraid to measure his French verses with Voltaire, would refrain from an attempt at complete composition. However, Frederick was admittedly a dilettante, and his works would hold little interest for us today were it not for their composer. But in eighteenth century music the borderline between the correct and the inspired is indistinct, and one might venture to suggest that his concertos and sonatas, competent imitations as they are, are more successful in their own line than his copious scribblings of French verse. Just as he showed the verses to Voltaire, so he submitted his compositions to Quantz and Graun, and accepted their emendations with becoming humility. But his mistakes had to be

[1] This modal teaching can still be traced in Frederick's habit of writing the key-signature with one less sharp or one more flat than usual.

[2] Nicolai, *Anekdoten, op. cit.*

[3] Spitta: Introduction to the reprint of selected works by Frederick, Breitkopf, 1889.

pointed out with tact. Nicolai tells how on one occasion, at the first performance of a flute sonata by Frederick, C. P. E. Bach, who was accompanying, noticed some consecutive fifths in the clavier part, and played them with embarrassing distinctness. The King said nothing, and later corrected the piece with the help of Benda; but this episode was doubtless reckoned on Bach's debit account.

Unlike many of his literary dabblings, Frederick's musical compositions were not written for publication, and they were all either for his own use or for the amusement of his relations or of the Court in general. The one piece which saw the light of day was an overture or symphony in the Italian style, probably composed in 1743[1] but prefixed to a pasticcio serenata performed in August 1747: the piece was pirated, probably through Nichelmann[2] and engraved and published at Nuremberg in 1750. According to Nicolai, this symphony was entirely the King's composition, and he had shown it to Quantz, who found nothing in it to correct. This particular serenata also contained two arias by Frederick, and others by him were inserted in the pasticcio serenatas *Galatea ed Acide* (July 1748) and *Il Trionfo della Fedeltà*[3] (August 1753). In addition, three cantatas are mentioned in his correspondence, one which he sent to his sister in Bayreuth in 1737, and two for Porporino; they have all disappeared. These works were intended for semi-private performance at Court; but Frederick also wrote several arias which were inserted in various operas by Graun performed at Berlin—there were three in the *Demofoonte* of 1746. These insertions were not mentioned in the libretto and so remained ostensibly anonymous, but the King's participation in an opera usually became known, and the popularity of an aria of his in *Coriolano* (1749) must

[1] Two other sinfonias by Frederick are early works, dating from the thirties.

[2] Christoph Nichelmann (1717-1761) was a pupil at Leipzig of J. S. Bach, and also studied opera at Hamburg under Telemann. He was appointed to the Berlin *Kapelle* in 1744 as second cembalist; his serenata *Il Sogno di Scipione* was performed in March 1746, but was not liked. Nichelmann did not get on with Graun or Benda, and was not regarded with favour by the King: he was dismissed in 1756.

[3] This must not be confused with the pastoral by Maria Antonia of Saxony, first performed in 1754. The Potsdam production was a pasticcio of arias by Graun, Hasse, Georg Benda and Frederick himself.

have made up to some extent for the comparative failure of that opera.

However, Frederick's vocal works are in general unremarkable, with conventionally correct melody and often rather lazy basses. This is not so with his compositions for the flute, which form both numerically and artistically the most important part of his output. But first we must consider the figure who played such a large role in Frederick's private musical activity, and whose works were the avowed models of the King's own compositions, Johann Joachim Quantz.

In 1741, when Frederick had become King, Quantz recognised where his interests obviously lay and joined the Prussian *Kapelle* on conditions which were "probably the most favourable ever granted to a wind-instrument player".[1] His regular yearly salary was 2,000 thalers, an advance of 1,200 thalers on that at Dresden, and in addition he received 100 ducats for each new concerto, 25 ducats for a new sonata and 100 ducats for each new flute made for the King under Quantz's direction. Since he wrote no less than 153 sonatas and 296 concertos during his stay of 32 years in Berlin, it is evident that he could not complain of his emoluments. In return Quantz was completely at the King's disposal—it appears he never had a holiday—and he was obliged to attend the Royal concert every evening and to be at hand for instruction and advice as required. Quantz seems to have been the most amiable of men, and he soon acquired a position of extraordinary ascendency with the King. His works for the flute were all that Frederick ever played except for his own compositions, and these were studiously modelled on the correct prototypes of Quantz. He alone was permitted to applaud the King's performance, and by judicious modulation and omission in his praise he could indicate any mistakes or faults, when Frederick would humbly ask him for correction, and then play the piece again. Such was Quantz's insight into the moods of the King and his skill in dealing with them that he declared he could divine the King's temper from his performance of a final allegro. This freedom of criticism and opinion accorded to a mere flautist probably aroused the secret envy of some of the other musicians, such as C. P. E. Bach; but it was no use protesting against this position, and all were obliged to recognise that if Graun was the ruler of the Opera House, Quantz reigned at Potsdam.

[1] Carse, *The Orchestra in the Eighteenth Century*.

Quantz wrote no works of any importance apart from his sonatas and concertos for the flute. Modelled on Tartini and Vivaldi respectively, they are among the best of contemporary works for the flute, and show a deep understanding and mastery of the technique of that instrument, at the time both more limited and more exacting than it is today. However, the effect of these works is often rather dry and lifeless, and probably because of the large output expected of him Quantz easily fell into routine and was particularly prone to tediously repetitive passage-work. He was certainly no genius, but a great virtuoso of his instrument who was also a gifted and facile composer.

Frederick made no secret of his indebtedness to Quantz in his own compositions, and indeed it is sometimes difficult to tell their works apart, except that the amateur is less polished and varied than the professional musician. Frederick wrote 121 flute sonatas and four concertos for flute and strings, and these were arranged in a numbered catalogue along with those of Quantz, making a total of 274 sonatas and 300 concertos in all. Through this repertoire Frederick moved with military precision and unvarying regularity at his evening concerts. His concertos are probably early works, the sonatas later—indeed Spitta claims to see the influence of J. S. Bach in some of the fugal finales—but they were all written in this period up to 1756. There is little to say about them which has not already been said about Quantz's compositions. They show a great understanding of the flute's capabilities and are smoothly written, even if they tend to an excessive exploitation of technical problems of execution, articulation or expression. There are few positive mistakes, even if there is frequently an air of amateurishness; yet Spitta does not hesitate to pronounce some movements "masterly". We must agree with Frederick when he said to Catt, "*Cela, n'est-il pas bonnête pour un Roi pauvre musicien?*"

From the works he played it is evident that Frederick was no mean performer on the flute. The concertos and sonatas were written with an eye to his technical abilities, and the rapid movements, with their lengthy passage-work in the middle register and infrequent pauses for breath, are taxing even for a virtuoso of today, with an improved instrument. Presumably it was calculated that Frederick could manage these passages when they were written. In general he succeeded, but occasionally his technique failed him, and he yielded to the easy

alternative and took the difficult passage more slowly than the rest, while the accompanying musicians dutifully fell in with these vagaries of tempo. But if the King's allegros could not always stand up to inspection, there was no difference of opinion over his adagios. According to Nicolai, Quantz wrote his slow movements to suit the King's taste, "either peaceful and contented *(zufrieden ruhig)* or seductive *(schmeichelnd)* or soothing *(herzrührend)*, never mournful or sad, for the King did not like that"; and Nicolai goes on to say that he never heard anyone play adagios more beautifully, "with a simplicity and intimate feeling *(innere Empfindung)*," which many virtuosi lacked. Other professional musicians bear the same witness to Frederick's expressive powers in these slow movements. Reichardt "could scarcely hear him without tears",[1] and commented on his tasteful ornamentation and apt cadenzas, while Frederick's accompanist Fasch declared that "of all the musicians I heard, the King, Bach (C. P. E.) and Benda played the most moving adagio".

Apart from his formal evening concerts, Frederick always had a flute to hand and often played to himself at odd moments, particularly after lunch or while waiting for the Cabinet to assemble: he told d'Alembert that these casual improvisations often provided him with happy ideas and inspiration for the business ahead. Quantz made numerous flutes for the King, of various materials such as ivory, ebony, boxwood and silver, which varied the tone-colour of the instrument, for Frederick always chose his flute according to the character of the piece to be played. He was also very particular over their manufacture: thus in October 1745 we find him writing from his headquarters in Silesia to his valet Fredersdorff; "Quantz is to make me two new flutes but not ordinary instruments—one with a strong tone, the other which can be blown lightly and will have a delicate tone"; but three days later he writes that he has received one of the flutes and finds it unsatisfactory. The flutes were actually made by workmen imported from abroad, who saw to the beautiful inlays and to the keys of amber and silver; but Quantz himself superintended the boring of the holes for with his acute ear, he was constantly concerned at the tendency of the flute to go out of tune. In his valuable manual of flute technique, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen*, published in 1752,

[1] Reichardt, *Briefe eines aufmerksamen Reisenden die Musik betreffend.*

he remarks that the sharpened notes on a flute are particularly faulty, and he was probably remembering the observation of his old teacher Alessandro Scarlatti, "My son, you know I cannot bear wind instruments, for they are never in tune". Quantz never overcame this difficulty, and Frederick's flutes which have been preserved are over some of their range disagreeably faulty in intonation to modern ears. Quantz seems to have ascribed this to thermal expansion, and on one occasion he scolded Frederick outright for holding the flute in his hand or under his arm between the pieces, instead of placing it on the music-stand to cool.

Of the inner circle of Potsdam musicians the two Grauns, the two Bendas and Quantz have already been mentioned. Lower in rank and in estimation than these was Carl Philipp Emmanuel Bach; but though he spent his whole life in comparative obscurity at Berlin and Hamburg, and it was only discerning critics such as Burney who could perceive his profound originality, he alone of all the Prussian musicians has survived until today, his fame if anything enhanced. The second surviving son of the great Johann Sebastian by his first wife Maria Barbara, Philipp Emmanuel was born on March 8th 1714. In 1734 he left home to study at the University of Frankfurt, where he also played the organ. Four years later, in 1738, he moved to Berlin, and though there was no room for him in the Rheinsberg *Kapelle,* he was assured of the King's patronage, a promise made good in 1740 when he was appointed principal accompanist: he claimed in his autobiography that "he had the honour of accompanying on the clavier, quite alone, at Charlottenburg the first flute solo that Frederick played after becoming King".[1]

Bach signalised his formal devotion to Frederick in the dedication of his six "Prussian" sonatas, published in 1742; but in fact the two men never got on. Bach had the usual disdain of a highly professional musician for the overweening amateur, and unwillingly accommodated himself to the royal vagaries of tempo and taste, (his incautious emphasis of the King's consecutive fifths has already been mentioned). On his side, Frederick probably sensed this unspoken contempt and was duly nettled, nor did he have any use for Bach's compositions, which quite neglected the flute. The basic cause of the antagonism

[1] Quoted in Schweitzer, *J. S. Bach.*

was the fact that Frederick was an unreserved admirer and strenuous upholder of the classical and balanced aesthetic of Hasse and Graun, while Bach was to become the greatest name in the *Sturm und Drang* period of music; his works are full of sensibility, sudden coquetry giving place to bold harmonic devices and dashing figurations, at times sentimental and tearful, in fact redolent of all those qualities to which Frederick was innately most antipathetic.

Bach's principal duty was to accompany the King at the harpsichord during the evening concert, an office performed alternately with the second cembalist Nichelmann. But in 1756, on the dismissal of Nichelmann, Carl Friedrich Fasch was appointed to his place on the recommendation of Benda, and he rapidly superseded Bach in the favour of the King, assuming the brunt of the accompanists work. However, the King must have had some inkling of Philipp Emmanuel's merit for despite several requests he refused to allow him to leave his service until 1767. Bach then went to Hamburg, to take Telemann's old post, perhaps a little consoled for his failure at Berlin by the title of honorary *Kapellmeister (von Haus aus)* conferred on him by the lively Princess Amalia, the King's sister, who seems to have been more appreciative then her brother of Bach's worth.

Perhaps Philipp Emmanuel's most notable achievement at Berlin was that he was instrumental in bringing about the famous meeting between Frederick and his father, the great Johann Sebastian. Philipp Emmanuel had married in 1744, a son being born in November 1745, and it was probably a desire to see his first grandson which prompted old Johann Sebastian to propose a visit to Berlin in the spring of 1747.[1] During his fourteen years as Cantor at Leipzig his fame had spread abroad, and had probably come to the ears of the King at Berlin. But Bach was famous less for his compositions, which were "learned" and outmoded in style, than for his powers of improvisation and for his fabulous skill in the arcana of antique

[1] Forkel, in his early biography of Bach, published in 1802, states that he went to Potsdam at Frederick's desire, expressed on several occasions to C. P. E. Bach. Forkel's information was derived from Friedemann Bach; but Terry (*Bach, a Biography*), prefers to assume that he went to Berlin primarily for family reasons. Forkel's account of the visit is given *in extenso* by Schweitzer.

counterpoint, an art falling rapidly into disuse. Thus it is likely that Frederick had heard of him as a curiosity and was anxious to see him, just as old Frederick William might have wished to see a particularly tall grenadier. Whatever his motive, hearing that Bach was in Berlin, he asked Philipp Emmanuel to bring him to Court.

On Sunday May 7th 1747 Bach arrived at Potsdam and was presented at the palace just before seven o'clock, when the players were already assembled for the evening concert. With the famous announcement, "Gentlemen, old Bach is here", Frederick adjourned the concert, and instead invited Bach to show his skill in improvisation at the new Silbermann pianofortes, of which there were no less than fifteen in the various rooms of the palace. Accompanied by the Court, Bach went from instrument to instrument, improvising in his extraordinary and powerful style, the elaborate baroque polyphony resounding strangely from the gilt rococo *fricassée* of the ceiling. Then at Bach's request Frederick gave him a subject for fugal development, which Bach treated extempore with the greatest erudition, to the astonishment of all the courtiers, who had been accustomed to nothing more abstruse than the easy counterpoint of Graun's overtures. On the next day Bach gave an organ recital in the Garrison Church at Potsdam, improvised a six-part fugue, to the King's amazement, and then left for Berlin and home to Leipzig.

So the monumental, inspired Protestant came face to face with the urbane, cosmopolitan amoralist, and from that meeting of flint and steel came the spark of *Das Musicalische Opfer,* The Musical Offering. The whole work is founded on the theme which Frederick had proposed, and if a last vindication is required of the King's musicianship it is provided by this theme, with its bold and striking beginning, and the thornily chromatic sequel, which gives rise to such harmonic richness in the contrapuntal treatment.[1] In his dedicatory letter Bach admitted that for lack of time to study the King's theme he had not been able to give a complete demonstration of his extempore contrapuntal skill—indeed, for his improvisation of the six-part fugue Bach had chosen a theme of his own. But now he had "resolved to give a right royal *thema* the treatment it deserves, and to make it known

[1] There is a palpable relationship between this theme and that of the *Kunst der Fuge,* so Frederick may be awarded double credit.

to the whole world",[1] and on July 7th 1747 he dispatched to the King the first part of the *Musical Offering*, engraved on five sheets and bound in brown leather with gold tooling. It contained six canons and a *fuga canonica* all on the Royal theme, along with a three-part *ricercar* or fugal fantasia, acrostically inscribed *Regis Iussu Cantio Et Reliqua Canonica Arte Resoluta*. Later he sent to Berlin the other two parts of the work, probably through Philipp Emmanuel. The second part consisted of two more canons, with the great six-part *ricercar* which Schweitzer calls "Bach's richest piece of fugal writing"; finally Bach added the trio-sonata for flute, violin and continuo, perhaps reflecting that Frederick would require some piece which he could play. With all his sturdy individuality, Bach was not indifferent to the glamour of royalty, especially since Frederick commanded the destinies of his son, and in his dedication he declared that he wrote the *Musical Offering* "with the single and laudable desire to exalt, though in a minor sphere, the fame of a potentate whose greatness, in the realm of music no less than in the arts of war and peace, is acclaimed and admired by all". In addition he inscribed two of the canons with symbolic flattery: the canon in augmentation was inscribed *Notulis crescentibus crescat Fortuna Regis*, "As the notes increase, so may the good fortune of the King"—while the canon in ascending modulation bears *Ascendenteque Modulatione ascendat Gloria Regis*, "And as the modulations ascend, so may the glory of the King".

Frederick was susceptible to flattery, but there is no indication that he ever looked at the *Musical Offering* or played its trio-sonata, or even rewarded the composer, though an agate snuff-box mounted in gold, valued at forty thalers in the posthumous inventory of Bach's effects, may have been the Royal acknowledgement.[2] This neglect of a work, which even today is regarded with more awe than affection, is not surprising in Frederick, for his taste, and the contemporary taste, had turned away from the aesthetic ideal to which Bach subscribed. Frederick never had much use for any of Bach's pupils with whom he came in contact, such as Philipp Emmanuel Bach, Agricola, Nichelmann or Kirnberger, finding their style too "learned", and opposed to

[1] The dedicatory letter is translated in Terry, *op. cit.*

[2] According to Terry, there is no record in the Prussian Court accounts of any payment or gift to Bach.

his ideal of classical elegance. He would certainly have regarded with sceptical surprise the revival of Bach's music which took place in the nineteenth century, and would have jested cynically with Voltaire on the quasi-religious adoration of the old cantor in which his Germans were to indulge. To appreciate executive skill in an obsolescent science was one thing; to regard this science as a valid method of composition was quite another. Flint and steel would always remain opposed in nature.

On August 29th 1756 Frederick invaded Saxony and struck the first blow in the Seven Years War. In the struggle that followed it seemed on several occasions that Bach's loyal hopes would be proved wrong, that the good fortune of the King had finally deserted him, that his glory would be extinguished in utter defeat. But his own amazing qualities of resiliance, organisation and generalship saved him at last, and after scoring brilliant successes and suffering crushing disasters, Frederick emerged at the Peace of Hubertsburg in January 1763 with his country exhausted, but intact.

The first winter of the war Frederick spent at Dresden, where he enjoyed the company of Hasse and Faustina; he also brought Graun, Porporino, Quantz and Benda from Berlin to make up the concerts. But this interlude lasted only a few months, and after March 1757 Frederick had no time for organised musical relaxation. Yet despite his diversions at Dresden Frederick still preserved his old enmity for that city, and it must have been with grim satisfaction that he perpetrated the wanton bombardment in July 1760, in which the Kreuzkirche and the whole Pirna suburb were destroyed, and also (though Frederick did not know this) all Hasse's manuscripts, which the composer had collected with a view to a printed edition.

Frederick's personal life during the war is described vividly by his reader, the Swiss Henri de Catt. In his memoirs we see how Frederick's overwrought nerves found their relief in interminable conversations on literary topics, in copious scribbling of verses and in melodramatic quotations of French tragedy, as on the day after the defeat at Hochkirch, when he confronted the astonished Catt with an apt speech from Racine's *Mithridate*. Yet his flute still held a special place in his affections, and he was never separated from his beloved instrument. In times of stress he would retire to his tent to improvise

undisturbed, or he might politely offer to play to Catt the latest solo which Quantz had sent him from Berlin. He always tried to practise for two hours a day or more, and on his own confession these two hours were often fertile in plans for new *coups* and stratagems in his struggle against such formidable odds. It was customary for generals to be accompanied by small wind-bands on their campaigns, to provide soothing music after the heat of battle; but it was not often that a general—and the greatest in Europe—found his inspiration in haphazard warblings on two feet of boxwood.

When he returned to Potsdam in June 1763 Frederick was a changed man. Seven years during which he was seldom more than a span from disaster had dried up the deepest springs of his nature, and he emerged desiccated, despotic, captious and so bigoted in his own opinions that he came closely to resemble, *sui generis,* the *infâme* against which he and Voltaire had preached so incessantly. This second period of his reign is as uniform in mood as the first; yet it is no longer the young and enthusiastic Frederick whom we see, but *der alte Fritz,* as emaciated in mind as in body, pottering about his gardens at Sans Souci in his tattered old uniform, stained with snuff, ruling his country with crabbed and querulous efficiency. There he sat at Potsdam, the most famous and respected monarch in Europe, petrified to a legend, visited almost as a curiosity by French and English tourists, all anxious to see the Philosopher of Sans Souci, whom they still persisted in regarding as the apotheosis of enlightened despotism. Despot he certainly was, as all who came into contact with him could testify with groans: the enlightenment was less evident.

The musical taste of the King had not altered since before the war, and it was now fixed with dogmatic rigidity. His creed was simple: Graun for the Opera, Quantz for his private concerts; they sufficed him and he was determined that they should suffice the public. The period of Hasse and Graun had ended in effect with the outbreak of the war, and the *opera seria* was tending now, through Jommelli and Traetta, towards the reform works of Gluck. But Frederick took no account of this: selections from *Orfeo* were played at Potsdam in an instrumental arrangement, but made no impression, and Frederick's sister Amalia, who had in many ways a livelier taste than her brother, wrote scornfully to Kirnberger, who had sent her the score of *Iphigénie*

en Aulide: "Herr Gluck, in my opinion . . . has (1) no invention at all, (2) a poor wretched gift of melody, and (3) no accent, no expression—it all sounds alike."[1] So Graun reigned still at the Opera, supreme posthumously as he had been in life (he had died in 1759) and only leaving place for his superior model Hasse,[2] and his inferior imitator Agricola.[3] Burney neatly summed up the state of affairs: " . . . Music is truly stationary in this country, His Majesty allowing no more liberty in that than he does in civil matters of government: not contented with being the sole monarch of the lives, fortunes and business of his subjects, he even prescribes rules to their most innocent pleasures."[4]

During the war all musical activity had ceased in Berlin. The Opera House was closed and many members of the *Kapelle* wandered away, while the others lingered on uneasily, often unpaid, in the hope that there would be employment for them in the future. On two occasions Berlin was captured by the enemy, and the Russian bombardment in October 1760 knocked several holes in the roof of the Opera House, through which the rain entered and destroyed much of the old scenery stored in the lofts there. With difficulty some *opera buffa* was organised for the Carnival of 1763-4, while some French actors and dancers provided amusement for the King in the old Schloss theatre. During the summer Baron de Pöllnitz, the new Intendant, busily tried to fill the gaps in the opera personnel—only three *figurantes* were left in the ballet—but it was not until the next Carnival of 1764-5 that it was found possible to revive the *opera seria.* On this occasion Frederick resolved to demonstrate the unity of tradition with the pre-war days, and he ordered the production of Graun's *Merope,* which was the last opera given in 1756. But this uncompromising gesture recoiled on itself, for it only underlined the inadequacies of the production. In vain had Pöllnitz complained that the King allowed him less money for the opera than before the war, disregarding the general rise in salaries and prices: he had to bear the brunt of the King's annoyance

[1] Quoted in Einstein, *Gluck.*

[2] Operas by Hasse in this period were: *Leucippo* (1765), *Didone abbandonata* (1769), *Piramo e Tisbe* (1771), *L'Eroe Cinese, Arminio* (1773), *Partenope, Attilio Regolo* (1775), *Cleofide* (1777), *Artemisia* (1778, 1785).

[3] Operas by Agricola were: *Achille in Sciro* (1765), *Amore e Psiche* (1767), *Oreste e Pylade=I Greci in Tauride* (1772, 1786).

[4] Burney, *Present State.*

over the shortcomings of *Merope,* and in April 1765 Frederick appointed a *Directeur des Spectacles* over his head, a step which did not prevent him from continuing to scold the Baron in a stream of letters concerning the management and running of the Opera.

The post of *Kapellmeister,* vacant since the death of Graun, had to be filled, and Pöllnitz tentatively suggested an Italian composer: but Frederick was determined to have none but a German (Italians were only fit for singers), and in default of a greater talent he was obliged to appoint Johann Friedrich Agricola as acting *Kapellmeister,* though he never enjoyed a title above that of *Hofcomponist.* Agricola was a composer of mediocre ability, in whom the elegant melody of Graun and the heavily learned style of his master at the Leipzig Thomasschule, J. S. Bach, were unsuccessfully blended. This combination was not at all to the taste of the King, who found Agricola uninspired and tedious. He was so dissatisfied with *Oreste e Pylade* (1771) at the rehearsals that he refused to attend the first performance, and immediately ordered Agricola to alter the work; the revised version, *I Greci in Tauride,* was a little more successful. Yet Agricola was the only choice, for neither C. P. E. Bach nor Benda had any experience in opera, and the one living opera composer whom the King still honoured, Hasse, was in retirement at Vienna, regretting with tranquil philosophy the destruction of his manuscripts by the Prussians.

Agricola had his first opportunity to shine with *Achille in Sciro,* performed in July 1765 to celebrate the marriage of the King's nephew and heir Frederick William, the Prince of Prussia. Despite his habitual parsimony, the King ordered for the opera eight new sets by Carlo Bibiena, and the opera was also adorned by the first appearance on the Berlin stage of the *castrato* Giovanni Carlo Concialini, who had been engaged in Venice by Cataneo. Concialini, who was only twenty years old, had already had considerable success at Munich, and with a full flexible voice of extended compass and remarkable breath control, he was considered to outshine even Salimbeni. Despite the poor supporting cast, Concialini scored such a success in *Achille in Sciro* that he was immediately engaged with the generous salary of 3,000 thalers and a promise of a pension if he stayed in Berlin. Later it became apparent that he would have to stay in Berlin willy-nilly, for when he visited Italy in 1786 he made no impression at all, since his

style of singing and expression—he had been instructed by the King in adagios—were now quite outmoded.

For several years Concialini remained the only singer of the first rank at Berlin, as successive Graun operas were revived, two in each Carnival, and his excellence stood out all the more for the mediocrity of the supporting singers, of whom the most notable were Emilia Molteni-Agricola and Porporino, both ageing remnants of the palmy pre-war days. Frederick was slow to fill the gaps in the ranks of his singers, and even went to the lengths of making *castrati* sing the female roles in *Ifigenia* (1768), a solecism which gave rise to much ribaldry in Berlin. In the ballet he made one effort with the engagement in 1766 of the remarkable *danseuse* Maria Burgioni, known as La Mantovanina; but she was no new Barbarina, and Frederick ingenuously confessed in a letter of 1770: "For seven years the Austrians, the Russians and the French led me such a dance that I have rather lost the taste for it in the theatre, or at any rate, I keep its cost within limits." This last observation was certainly true, and we may pity the wretched Intendant, whose duty it was to produce something to tickle the eye, after receiving this note from the King: "*Les ballets sont Trop Tristes, il faut quelque-chose qui réjouisse et qui ne Coute pas, je ne Dépense rien qu'un habit pour la Nouvelle Actrisse, rien pour les ballets....*"[1]

The Berlin public naturally resented having this outmoded style thrust down their throats, and the Opera soon fell into disrepute, being visited more as a social institution than as an artistic experience. Frederick himself no longer attended regularly, contenting himself with the opening performance of the season and a few others, as his health and humour permitted. The brilliance was quickly dimmed, and his once-cherished Opera soon fell to the second rank.

Yet in 1771 there began a distinct revival in the Berlin Opera, largely due to a singer whose story illustrates only too clearly Frederick's attitude and behaviour during these latter years. Gertrude Elisabeth Schmehling was born at Cassel in 1749, and when she was only ten years old she was taken by her father to England as a prodigy violinist. But the London ladies, horrified at this unfeminine accomplishment, persuaded her to abandon the violin in favour of singing,

[1] MS note by Frederick on a letter of June, 1771, quoted in Scheider, *op. cit.*

for she had a strong clear voice, though as yet untrained. So promising was her progress that in 1765 she entered Hiller's Gesangschule at Leipzig for a thorough training in vocal technique, and she emerged in 1771 a singer of the first rank. Already in 1767 she had sung the chief role in a revival of *Talestri* by Maria Antonia of Saxony, and that conceited and talented old woman had been pleased to give the young Schmehling personal instruction in the performance of adagios. Early in 1771 Schmehling went to Berlin and Maria Antonia wrote to the King: "*. . . Je connais beaucoup la Schmehling. . . . Elle a une facilité étonnante et une voix admirable; et comme elle est à la source du goût, Votre Majeste aura en peu la plus brillante chanteuse de ce siècle. . . .*"

But at first *la source du goût* was unwilling to recognise the new star: only Italians in Frederick's view could sing. However, he was persuaded to invite her to Potsdam one evening, and in her autobiographical sketch[1] Schmehling tells how, as she sang, Frederick drew nearer and nearer to her, until he was leaning right over her shoulder to read the music in her hand. Finally he gave her the aria *Mi paventi il figlio indegno* from Graun's *Britannico* to sing at sight, and with artful strategy she executed this exactly in the manner and style of the dead Astrua. Such an evocation of the past could not fail to conquer the King, and for six weeks on end the young singer performed every evening at Potsdam, while the delighted Frederick, ever particular over his adagios, appointed Porporino and Concialini to instruct her in the last mysteries of that art. Without ado Schmehling was engaged with a salary of 3,000 thalers, and in March 1771 she made a brilliant début with Concialini in Hasse's pastoral *Piramo e Tisbe*.

This performance initiated a short period of considerable splendour at the Berlin Opera. Schmehling and Concialini seemed to spur each other on to greater efforts on the stage; they were able to make revivals of operas by Graun such as *Britannico* (1771), *Merope* (1773) and *Demofoonte* (1775) sound convincing, whilst for them the King ordered the production of various operas by Hasse not hitherto performed at Berlin, such as *Attilio Regolo* (1775), *Cleofide* (1777) and *Artemisia* (1778). Furthermore, their brilliance moved the King to something approaching generosity over the financial arrangements for

[1] Published posthumously in the *Allgemeine Musicalische Zeitung*, 1875.

the supporting cast and production of these operas. The new Intendant even succeeded in extracting from the King a promise of adequate fixed sums for the production of each new opera—3,000 thalers for the décor, 2,500 for the costumes, and 1,200 for the ballet. Hitherto the King had given orders for new sets to be prepared only when there was no old scenery which could possibly be used; but in 1773 the excellent scene-painter Bernardino Gagliari was called from Turin to construct six sets for a revival of Hasse's *Arminio*, and he was later succeeded by his capable pupil Michele Verona.

But Schmehling wrecked this promising revival by her own bad behaviour. *Prima donna* of a great Opera at the age of twenty-two, she allowed her extraordinary success to upset her equilibrium, and soon began to display the less amiable traits of her profession. Already in 1772 she was pestering the King for his support in an unpleasant quarrel with her father, with whom she was living, and though Frederick refused the extreme step of banishment, for which she asked, he directed that they should live apart. Freed from parental control Schmehling promptly plunged into a violent flirtation with a cellist in the Royal *Kapelle* named Ignatius Mara. From the first this affair was frowned on by the King, who knew Mara's reputation for idleness and loose-living: he abruptly refused his permission for the marriage and seized on the excuse of a supposed impertinence to Prince Henry to throw Mara into the fortress of Spandau. The despair of Schmehling at this indignity offered to her lover was unbounded, and she threatened that unless Mara was released she would not renew her contract, which was about to expire. Judging that they had both had a sharp lesson, Frederick released the cellist, and in July 1774 with cynical complaisance, he gave permission for their marriage.

Soon the new Mme Mara discovered that the King's opinion of her husband was correct, and this unhappiness, with the declining favour of the King, whose intimacy she had forfeited by her marriage, led her to consider ways and means of leaving his service. As far back as March 1773 Frederick had had wind of clandestine offers from England, and had given orders that she should be kept under strict surveillance. Now, in the spring of 1776, Mara announced that she intended to spend her four months' leave in England, and asked for a quarter's salary in advance. Frederick, fearing that she might not

return, refused this request, and since her husband had dissipated all her savings the wretched woman had no funds with which to leave Prussia. So she took the rash resolution to drive the King to dismiss her for insubordination.

The trouble came to a climax in July 1776, during the visit of the Grand Duke Paul of Russia. For this occasion a revival had been planned of the opera *Angelica e Medoro* by Graun, revised by the new *Kapellmeister* Reichardt. The latter sent Mara a new aria *Nell'orror d'atro furor,* but she returned it with a letter, declaring that she would not sing such stuff. When the King heard of this he clapped the husband into Spandau once again and wrote furiously to the Intendant, adding in his own hand at the end of the letter, *"Elle est payée pour chanter et non pour écrire"*. Then at the dress rehearsal of the opera the Grand Duke took offence, because in the prologue the Genius of Prussia was sung by Tosoni, a large, brawny man, and the Genius of Russia by the *seconda donna* Koch, a very small and weedy creature. Accordingly, hasty adjustments had to be made: the bulky Porporino was made to learn the part, and during the performance Koch stood by him as an attendant, ready to leap into the breach in case the elderly *castrato* forgot his part. Just before the first performance Mara suddenly announced that she was ill; but two hours before the curtain went up a carriage escorted by eight dragoons arrived at her house with positive orders from the King that she should go with them. Despite her outraged protests they took her off, mattress and all. Once at the Opera House she resolved not to exert herself at all, and indeed succeeded in making a fiasco of the first act: but in the second her natural vanity asserted itself, and to impress the Grand Duke she sang superbly.

This sort of bickering might have gone on indefinitely, for it was evident that the King as a point of honour would never let her go of his own free will, and his strict surveillance prevented any possibility of escape. Her deliverance came with the War of the Bavarian Succession, which broke out in March 1778 and put a stop to all theatrical diversion. As Frederick himself observed when dismissing his French actors: *"Les conjonctures actuelles préparent à des scènes plus sérieuses, on peut très bien se passer de comiques. . . ."* There was no opera in the Carnival of 1778–9, and when Frederick returned after the Peace of Teschen in May 1779 it was apparent that he had become, if possible,

even more crabbed, and that his attitude to music was approaching indifference. Without any fuss he allowed Mara to escape to Leipzig.

The acting *Kapellmeister* Agricola had died in December 1774, and he was replaced by the King's accompanist Fasch: but he had little experience in opera or conducting, and his appointment was only temporary, while Frederick looked round for a new *Kapellmeister.* After an attempt to secure Naumann from Dresden, his choice fell on an interesting character, Johann Friedrich Reichardt, who was at that time in the Prussian Civil Service. A leading light of the German *Aufklärung,* Reichardt's abilities were almost as much literary as musical: he had studied under Kant at Königsberg, and between 1772 and 1774 he had toured Germany, summing up his impressions of the musical life in his interesting *Briefe eines aufmerksamen Reisenden.* Musically he was an original composer, paying particular attention to the *Lied,* and in addition—though Frederick probably did not know this—becoming a convert to Gluck, whose methods he wished to apply to the creation of German grand opera. But in entering Frederick's service, Reichardt found that he was tied and bound, for in the King's view his prime duty was meekly to carry on the undefiled tradition of Graun. So although Reichardt frequently expressed his longing to write an opera, he was restricted to the retouching of *Angelica e Medoro* and to the rewriting of parts of Hasse's *Artemisia* (1778) in a style suitably deferential to the original.

As a result, Reichardt's brimming energies found an outlet only in the flourishing world of bourgeois music. Under the influence of men such as Fasch, Hiller, Kirnberger and Marpurg the musical life of the capital, as distinct from the Royal Opera, was extremely active and lively, and Berlin was well known for its excellent musical criticism and journalism and also for a rising school of composers of the early *Lied.* The most elaborate of these bourgeois musical institutions, which were all regarded with some suspicion by the King, was the German opera under the able impresario Döbbelin, who since 1771 had been presenting a stream of *Singspiele* by both native and foreign composers to the delighted Berliners. For obvious reasons Frederick especially disliked this *Volksoper,* but he did not feel able to suppress it, and indeed in the last years of his life he actually supported it, since his own Opera was so poor.

The effort of the Potato War had quite worn out the King, and he was now a decrepit, querulous old man, interested in little save his own ailments. After the departure of Mara the Opera fell immediately into a lamentable condition, through the King's unwillingness to provide even the most meagre resources for the productions. Not a penny had been spent on the décor or costumes of *Armida* (1780), and the whole performance was so shoddy that there were outspoken criticisms in the Berlin newspapers. The King, of course, blamed the singers and the Intendant, and was so disgusted that he almost gave up attending the Opera. He would go to Berlin for the Carnival, but on the opera evenings he would hold small receptions as a counter-attraction. Not even *Silla,* for which he had written the libretto, could tempt him, and once the King had deserted the Opera the public quickly followed suit, to the profit of Döbbelin. The Intendant von Arnim departed in 1778 and the management of the Opera fell into the hands of the poet Landi and the scene-designer Verona, who, on national and musical grounds, quarrelled bitterly with the *Kapellmeister* Reichardt. But Reichardt had the powerful Berlin critics behind him, and he was able with impunity to call Graun's *Orfeo* (1785) "an old Italian botchery"—*ein altes Italienisches Opernflickwerk.* Ten years previously this would have meant a spell in Spandau for the bold writer; but this was the last Carnival which Frederick spent in Berlin, and he was no longer interested.

It is difficult not to lay the blame for this deplorable story on Frederick's shoulders. If we give him the credit for the brilliant sixteen years between 1740 and 1756, he must also bear the blame for the decline between 1762 and 1786. The root of the trouble, besides his excessive parsimony,[1] was his interference with the minute details of the opera management, so that the Intendant was afraid to make any move without consulting the King. Frederick was constantly afraid that he was being cheated, and in September 1771 we find him sending for the old accounts of the Opera to compare with those which the Intendant had just submitted; six years later he refused to consider a proposal for new materials for the fire-brigade on the grounds that some of the equipment had been renewed only a few years previously.

[1] Frederick had arbitrarily discontinued the old theatre fund after the war, so that now the Opera depended entirely on his own charity.

But his zeal was directed principally towards the ballet and the production. He found to his disgust that dancers all asked for high salaries, and though he charged the Intendant, *"Faites des amours à bon marché, car à Mon age on ne les paye plus cher"*, he discovered that when this advice was followed the results were often mediocre; *"Ce Dansseur et sa femme ne vallent pas 6 sous, il faut les renvoyer au plus vite et par le plus court"*. But it was the expense of the opera décor which particularly enraged Frederick: *" . . . En fait des décorations Je ne veux rien de neuf: les vieilles peuvent et doivent être employées malgré ce que le peintre-décorateur en dise, et dont Vous n'avez que Vous défier. . . ."* So the brilliance of Mara and Concialini was offset by the wholesale shabbiness of the production.

Much has been made of Frederick's tyranny over his musicians, but this has perhaps been exaggerated. *L'affaire Mara* was notorious in its day, and when the singer had escaped she lost no opportunity to trumpet her wrongs in every capital of Europe, so that amazed gossips, to whom Frederick was already a legend, pictured the Prussian musicians as playing with cowed submissiveness, under the continual shadow of Spandau. Certainly Frederick stood no nonsense from any of his servants, were they musicians, civil servants, generals or Privy Councillors, and if he was dissatisfied they were dismissed without ado. But this was the method of autocracy and made for efficiency, for the members of the *Kapelle,* knowing his eagle eye and summary methods, were chary of attempting to slack or to impose on the King in any way. Apart from the episode of Mara, the *Kapelle* ran with exemplary smoothness, contrasting with the rather haphazard methods in many other Courts, and it was only at the very end of the reign, when the King had succumbed to the somnolence of age, that internal squabbles broke out between the German and the Italian parties. Probably a just picture of Frederick's relations with his musicians is given by that admirable observer Burney:[1] "In the opera-house as in the field, H.M. is such a rigid disciplinarian that, if a mistake is made in a single movement or evolution, he immediately remarks and rebukes the offender: and if any of his Italian troops dares to deviate from strict discipline by adding, altering or diminishing a single passage in the parts they have to perform, an order is sent *de par le Roi* for them to

[1] Burney, *Present State.*

adhere strictly to the notes written by the composer at their peril." The real charge against Frederick is not so much of individual, but of artistic tyranny.

In his private life stagnation prevailed. Gone was the easy companionship of Rheinsberg and its sparkling intellectual freemasonry: now Frederick presided with captious misanthropy over a Court composed less of friends than of sycophants and stalking-horses for his intellectual vanity. Guibert, in his *Journal d'un voyage en Allemagne,*[1] retails the frank judgment of the Abbé Bastiani, an old intimate of the King, who had now judged it prudent to retire to Breslau: "The King has never known friendship and is incapable of feeling it. . . . His subjects are in his eyes nothing but common livestock designed to fertilise or embellish the land which he governs. Love of power and vanity are his two most lively passions. Music, the arts, literature, philosophy, friendship—all this is to him so much recreation, padding, tomfoolery."

This decline in taste is visible in the squat and ugly Neues Palais at Potsdam, which Frederick built as a gesture of defiance at the end of the war, though he was never very fond of it. It included yet another theatre, built on the lines of that in the Potsdam Schloss, though larger; this was inaugurated in July 1769 with a performance of Hasse's oratorio *La Conversione di Sant'Agostino,* almost the only sacred work which we know the King to have heard.

In his private music it is perhaps less correct to speak of a decline, since the standard was simple and easily maintained. Every evening a concert was held, and with unswerving regularity Frederick manoeuvred through the fixed rota of Quantz's sonatas and concertos, untroubled by their ever-growing anachronism. Burney was at Potsdam in October 1772 and has left us a vivid description of one of these musical evenings, which to all except the principal performers must have been of formidable dullness. An invitation to attend had been procured from the King, probably through the agency of the Earl Marischal Keith, who had sent to the Palace some sheets of Burney's *Italian Tour* and the plan of his forthcoming *History of Music.* After being shown over the Neues Palais, where he admired the concert-room hung with huge gilt mirrors and decorated with sculpture, Burney proceeded across the park to Sans Souci. In the

[1] Quoted in Gaxotte, *Frederick the Great.*

anteroom he met the *Concertmeister* Franz Benda, by whom he was introduced to the seventy-six-year-old Quantz, and the three men stood chatting, while from behind the double doors floated out a cloud of scales and arpeggios, as the King played in his fingers for the concert. At last the players trooped in and Frederick settled down to play three concertos by Quantz one after the other. The next day Quantz admitted to Burney that one of the concertos played the previous evening was twenty years old, while the other two were forty years old, so that on that particular evening Frederick must have come to an end of the 300 concertos and started again at the beginning of the list with works composed in the thirties. It is no wonder that Burney found that many passages in these concertos, "though novel when composed, were now quite hackneyed and out of date".

Of Frederick's performance Burney speaks very highly. "I was much pleased, and even surprised with the neatness of his execution in the *allegros,* as well as by his expression and feeling in the *adagio:* in short, his performance surpassed, in many particulars, anything I had ever heard among *Dilettanti,* or even professors." He also noted that Frederick, perhaps for the benefit of his visitor, made his cadenzas "very long and studied". But the King was getting old, his breath control was failing, and Burney observed: "It is easy to discover that these concertos were composed at a time when he did not so frequently require an opportunity of breathing as at present; for in some of the divisions, which were very long and difficult, as well as in the closes, he was obliged to take his breath, contrary to rule, before the passages were finished."

"M. Quantz bore no other part in the performance of the concertos of tonight than to give the time with the motion of his hand, at the beginning of each movement, except now and then to cry out *bravo!* to his royal scholar at the end of the solo parts and closes; which seems to be a privilege allowed to no other musician of the band." Indeed Quantz's life pursued a tranquil if monotonous course in the unswerving favour of the King. Both he and his pupil had almost ceased to compose, and these latter years of the great flautist were passed in calm and decent obscurity. He died in 1777, leaving a concerto unfinished, with only the first movement and the theme of the second written down. As a last tribute to his old master and faithful servant,

Frederick completed this concerto, and this was also his own last effort at composition: when he came to the second movement he remarked to Benda: "You see how beautiful was Quantz's last thought in this world."

So Frederick pursued his unvarying life, the incarnation of eighteenth century absolutism, while his country moved through the tremors of the *Sturm und Drang* towards the calm classicism of the end of the century. As he grew older, he looked back with ever greater regret to those palmy and correct days when he had first come to the throne. Behind the polished style we can detect a real *cri du cœur* when he writes to Maria Antonia of Saxony in January 1777: "... *Le public s'amuse ici avec l'opéra de* Cleofide *de Hasse, qu'on a remise sur le théatre. Les bonnes choses restent toujours telles, et quoiqu'un les ait entendues autrefois, on aime encore à les rentendre; d'ailleurs la nouvelle musique est dégénérée en un charivari, qui blesse les oreilles au lieu de les flatter, et le chant noble n'est plus connu des contemporains. Pour le retrouver, il faut recourir à Vinci, Hasse et Graun. . . .*"

But he outlived all his friends—Maria Antonia, Graun, Quantz and Benda, who died in May 1786, having accompanied the King, according to one estimate, in more than 50,000 concerto performances. Frederick's fingers had become stiff with gout; finally, a crowning disaster, his front teeth fell out, and he was obliged to abandon his flute, his *Principessa* of the old Rheinsberg days. *Le bon goût* was irretrievably lost.

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